Monastic and Lay Traditions in North-Eastern Tibet



EDITED BY

YANGDON DHONDUP, ULRICH PAGEL AND GEOFFREY SAMUEL

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Cover illustration: Four Tantric practitioners who have completed a three-month retreat near Rgyal bo chu ca, Reb kong. Photo: Yangdon Dhondup, October 2010.

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PREFACE

Yangdon Dhondup, Ulrich Pagel and Geoffrey Samuel

This volume derives from an international workshop, 'Unity and Diversity: Monastic and Non-monastic Traditions in Amdo,' convened by the three editors under the sponsorship of the Arts and Humanities Research Council and held from Friday, 30th September to Sunday, 2nd October 2011 at St Michael's College Llandaff, Cardiff. The workshop included eleven papers, of which nine are presented in revised form in the present volume.

The workshop was funded by a grant to Ulrich Pagel by the U.K. Arts and Humanities Research Council for a project entitled "Locating Culture, Religion and the Self: A Study of the Tantric Community in Reb kong," awarded in December 2007. The grant ran from 2008 to 2011, and was directed by Ulrich Pagel. Dr Yangdon Dhondup was employed as researcher on this project, while Geoffrey Samuel and Hildegard Diemberger, who also took part in the Cardiff conference, were consultants for the project. Humchen Chenaktsang, founder and director of Ngakmang Research Institute in Xining (Qinghai), who collaborated with Yangdon Dhondup on a previous research project, also served as a consultant. Due to funding issues, he was unable to attend the Cardiff conference.

The aim of this project was to analyse and document the religious and social history of the tantric practitioner community in Reb kong, east Tibet. The project focused on the period from the 17th to 19th centuries when the influence of the Reb kong tantric community was at its height. It emerged as a coherent religious and social group that threatened to weaken the dominant religious institution in the area, the large Dge lugs pa monastery of Rong bo dgon chen. The research aimed to assess the factors behind the emergence of the Reb kong tantric community and to examine how the community managed to sustain its reputation for more than two centuries.

The results of Yangdon Dhondup's work on this project are emerging in a series of published articles and book chapters (e.g. Dhondup 2009, 2011 and 2013). We felt however that it would be valuable to gather together as many as possible of the scholars working at present on Reb kong and its wider region in order to gain a wider picture of the context for the Reb kong tantric community, and provide an occasion for productive interaction and discussion. The Cardiff workshop was the result, and

it did indeed prove to be a very worthwhile occasion for the participants. We hope and believe that this collection of papers presented at the workshop, revised in the light of the stimulating discussion at Cardiff, will be of interest and value to a wider audience.

We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding this project, to the School of Oriental and African Studies for hosting it, and to St Michael's College Llandaff for providing such a pleasant and congenial environment for our workshop.

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INTRODUCTION



Map 0.1. The Tibetan Autonomous Region and Tibetan autonomous counties and prefectures in neighbouring provinces. Adapted from map courtesy of the Tibetan and Himalayan Library, March 2013.



Fig. 0.1. Rong bo Town (Ch. Long wu). Photo: Yangdon Dhondup, October 2010.

REB KONG IN THE MULTIETHNIC CONTEXT OF A MDO: RELIGION, LANGUAGE, ETHNICITY, AND IDENTITY

Geoffrey Samuel

This chapter is intended as an introduction to the research presented in the book. While I have visited the region of Reb kong[1] (Reb kong/Reb gong/Re skong, corresponding to the modern Chinese county of Tongren, 同仁), I am not a specialist either on Reb kong or on the Tibetan province of A mdo within which it is situated, and which corresponds to parts of the modern Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan. Thus, this introductory chapter is mainly concerned with giving an introductory account of Reb kong and its wider context within Tibet, and discussing some of the more general issues raised by the collection. I shall be looking particularly at the question of monastic and non-monastic traditions in Tibetan Buddhism. This is an issue in which I have been interested in for many years (cf. Samuel 1993), and the workshop from which this book derives was specifically oriented around these two parallel and contrasting religious traditions.

The study of A mdo by Western scholars goes back quite a way, since this was one of the more accessible parts of the Tibetan cultural region in the first half of the twentieth century. There are a number of substantial studies by missionary scholars such as Matthias Hermanns (1949, 1959) or Robert Ekvall (1939, 1952, 1954a, 1954b, 1956, 1964, 1968, 1981), by explorers such as Wilhelm Filchner (1933) or Joseph Rock (1956), as well as accounts by a variety of other visitors (e.g. Teichman 1921). More recently parts of A mdo have again been among the more accessible areas of Tibetan society for Western scholars, and a number of people have taken advantage of this, including all of the Western contributors to this volume. It is also worth mentioning the significant body of ethnographic description produced by Tibetans and members of other local ethnic groups under the guidance of Kevin Stuart and his associates over the last decade or so (e.g.

[1] Tibetan names and terms are given in Wylie transliteration, except for Labrang and Kumbum, for which I have retained the standard English spellings, but given the Wylie equivalent on first occurrence. The editors of this volume have decided to spell the place as "Reb kong". On the origin and meaning of the different spellings of Reb kong, Reb gong and Re skong, see 'Jigs med theg mchog, 1988: 728 and Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, 1982: 303.

Stuart, Banmadorji and Huangchojia 1995; Skal Bzang Nor Bu and Stuart 1996; Dpal-ldan-bkra-shis and Stuart 1998; Janhunen et al. 2007; Snying bo rgyal and Rino 2008; and the *Asian Highlands Perspectives* series). Altogether, while some parts of A mdo have received much more attention than others, this is undoubtedly one of the better-studied regions of ethnic Tibet. But what overall sense can we make of the picture revealed by these various studies?

Ethnic and Religious Complexity

One of the most striking issues about A mdo in general, including the Reb kong region, is its ethnic complexity. This region has for a long way back been an area of contact between different cultures. If we ask what those cultures are, however, this already raises problems. How ethnic groups in A mdo are now defined, and how they have come to define themselves, is the product of a long historical process. The ethnic patchwork of modern Qinghai—which is generally described in terms of Tibetan, Mongol, Tu, Salar, Han, and Hui as the main ethnicities—reflects the way in which individuals and communities chose to define themselves, or were defined, in the late twentieth century (Cooke 2004, 2008; cf. also Fried 2009). In reality, ethnonyms such as the Tu (formerly Monguor) do not delimit a group with a clear and unambiguous linguistic or cultural identity today. This is an area where Kevin Stuart and his colleagues have provided significant data, along with the Finnish linguist Juha Janhunen and the Amdo Qinghai project in Helsinki (Janhunen 2006; Janhunen et al. 2007).

Janhunen has attempted to reconstruct the ethnic (or more precisely linguistic) background to A mdo as it is today. He suggests that Altaic (Turkic and Mongolic) languages may represent the oldest stratum in what he refers to as the A mdo *Sprachbund* (Janhunen 2006: 111–2, 114–7). The idea here is that in A mdo today there are a whole series of languages from different origins which have accommodated to each other over time, the major other components being from the Tibetan (or Bodic) and Chinese (Sinitic) language families. If the original language in the region was Altaic, however, its identity is by no means clear. It seems unlikely to be one of the Turkic or Mongolic languages present in the area today. In fact, all of the languages today spoken in the area would seem to have arrived after the time of the Tuyuhun (吐于浑), the people known as 'A zha in Tibetan (cf. Janhunen 2006: 117). The Tuyuhun or 'A zha arrived in the area in the late 3rd century CE and are themselves of obscure linguistic affiliations.

At any rate, both Reb kong itself and the wider A mdo region today presents a complex ethnic patchwork, with major presences of Tibetan, Chinese and Mongolian, and a variety of other Turkic and Mongolic languages, mostly spoken by relatively small numbers of people. While the overall language environment becomes increasingly Tibetan-dominated as one moves towards the south and west from the Xining valley, there are substantial groups who are Mongol-speaking or who claim to have had Mongol origins within these regions. These are generally called Sog po or Hor by Tibetans today (cf. Diemberger 2011; see also Dhondup and Diemberger 2002). It seems reasonable to assume that there has been a progressive process of 'Tibetanisation' within the region (cf. Samuel 1993: 146–9, 560–4), but the details are obscure.

The origin stories of Tibetan communities in the border region are often associated with the expansion of the first Tibetan Empire (Dhondup 2011: 37). However, while the accounts of fighting between the early Tibetan emperor Srong btsan sgam po's armies and the Tuyuhun in the Kokonor region in the early seventh century probably have a historical basis, it is unclear whether these campaigns led to significant Tibetan settlement in the area (cf. Van Schaik 2010). The first Tibetan-dominated state in the region that we know of for certain seems to be that of Rgyal sras (Ch. Gusiluo) in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. It was involved in conflict with the Tangut state (Tib. Mi nyag, Ch. Xixia; 1038–1227) somewhat to the East, and also involved in shifting alliances with early Chinese military outposts in the area of what is now Xining (cf. Gaubatz 1996; Smith 2006).

The Tangut state was Vajrayāna Buddhist, and so presumably was Rgyal sras's kingdom. There are also legends of an early Bonpo presence in the area; the great Bonpo sage Dran pa Nam mkha', who was a contemporary of Padmasambhava (late eighth century) is supposed to have stayed in Reb kong for a while. This brings us onto the question of religious diversity in the Reb kong region. Here I am concerned primarily with diversity in terms of different Tibetan Buddhist and Bon traditions. Today Reb kong, and the wider A mdo region, is dominated by large Dge lugs pa monastic institutions, some of them with several thousand monks who had taken vows of celibacy. The larger were training centres to which monks came from all over Northeastern Tibet and from Mongolia. Alongside these there is, in the Reb kong region, a well-established tradition of smaller Rnying ma pa institutions, associated with a network of local lay Rnying ma pa village temples and tantric practitioners (sngags pa, sngags ma). There is also a parallel tradition of Bon po monasteries, village temples and lay tantric practitioners (see Thar 2003, 2008, and Millard, this volume).

These Bon po practitioners belong to the widespread Tibetan tradition of G.yung drung Bon, which has hereditary and reincarnate lamas, monasteries, monks, Tantric and non-Tantric deities and practices, parallel to those of Tibetan Buddhist traditions (Kvaerne 1995; Karmay and Watt 2007; Samuel 2011).

However none of the monastic institutions in the region today go back to the time of the early empire, or even the time of Rgyal sras. The older religious pattern in the region is generally assumed to be one of hereditary lay practitioners, both Rnying ma and Bon. There seems to have been a Sa skya presence prior to the major Dge lugs pa expansion of the 16th and 17th centuries; the *nang so* or hereditary chieftains of Reb kong appear to have belonged to a hereditary Sa skya lama family, and the monastery they founded at Rong bo, today the main town in the Reb kong region, was presumably also originally Sa skya (Dhondup 2011a). The monastery of Co ne, to the east, was originally apparently a Sa skya foundation. There were also some fairly early Bka' gdams pa foundations in the region; Tsong kha pa's teacher Chos rje Don grub Rin chen is said to have founded two monasteries after returning to A mdo from his studies in Central Tibet.

The major monastic institutions of A mdo today, which include Labrang (Bla brang Bkra shis 'khyil), Kumbum (Sku 'bum byams pa ling), Co ne, and many others, as well as Rong bo dgon chen in Reb kong, belong to the Dge lugs pa tradition. Alongside these, there is a scattering of smaller Rnying ma pa institutions, and some Bon monasteries. Some of the great Dge lugs pa monasteries of the region may have grown out of small early foundations. However, the large-scale expansion of Dge lugs pa monasteries in A mdo dates from the 16th century or later and was generally funded by local Mongol princes and rulers. Kumbum, at Tsong kha pa's birthplace not far from the modern city of Xining, was completed in 1583; Rong bo dgon chen became a large Dge lugs pa institution under Qoshot Mongol patronage in the 17th century; Labrang was founded in the early 18th century, and Co ne's expansion into a large Dge lugs pa institution also took place at this time.

Substantial Rnying ma pa monastic institutions date from slightly later, and are linked to the revival of the Rnying ma pa and the growth of Rnying ma pa monasticism in Tibetan regions more generally from the late 18th century onwards (cf. Dalton 2006). The most significant traditions in the Reb kong area were those of Smin grol ling and of 'Jigs med gling pa's Klong chen snying thig. Of the six medium-size monasteries with which the Reb kong tantrics are affiliated, three are linked to Smin grol ling, and the other three to the Klong chen snying thig tradition. As for the Bon po,

the one major Bon monastery in the Reb kong area, Bon brgya, dates from the early 20th century.

What we see in A mdo in the 16th to 18th centuries has perhaps some resemblance to what was happening in Central Tibet in the 10th to 12th centuries, when Tibetans would travel to India to acquire Buddhist teachings and Tantric empowerments, and return to their own country to found the religious centres and monasteries of the Gsar ma pa traditions, with patronage from local rulers and big men. In A mdo, though, while the lamas may have been local Tibetans who went off to study in Central Tibet, the patrons were mainly Mongol, and the whole process was part of the gradual 'Tibetanisation' of the area at several levels, cultural and linguistic as well as religious. In fact, it is unclear how far the lamas described in the chronicles were all ethnically Tibetan, whatever this might have meant at the time, and I am unaware of anyone who has looked at this question in detail. Ethnic identity is not evident from ordination names, which are given in Tibetan form in the Tibetan texts on which we rely for our historical sources. Where the lama comes from an aristocratic Tibetan lineage, as with Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis (1688–1743), who claimed descent from the Rlangs family, the situation is clear enough (cf. Dhondup 2013; Stoddard, this volume), but in other cases it may be less so. Perhaps one needs to place the whole issue of ethnic identity in the region at this period much more directly into question than has, as far as I know, been done so far.

Historicising Ethnicity and Religion in the Reb Kong Region

What the ethnic classifications themselves mean, as I have implied above, is also open to question. In a recent paper on the so-called Tu nationality, Susette Cooke discusses how the PRC's classification of nationalities, which is ultimately based on the idea of blood-kinship, led to the creation of a largely artificial grouping of people (Cooke 2004; cf. also Cooke 2008, Cooke and Goodman 2010). The creation of the Tu was a necessity because the Chinese scholars who were involved in developing the classification wanted an 'indigenous' group for the region. In fact the term derives not from any ethnonym used by the people now classified as Tu, the majority of whom would have used 'Monguor' or related terms, but from an earlier Chinese term *turen* 土人. This had the meaning "natives" and was used essentially as a label for local people who did not fit clearly into one of the major Chinese ethnonyms. The syllable Tu is pronounced in the same

way, though written with a different character, to the first syllable of the name of the somewhat mysterious Tuyuhun (吐于浑) people mentioned earlier, and one part of the local discourse regarding the Tu today is that they are often described as descendants of the Tuyuhun.

The term 'Tu' has by now been largely accepted by the population who have been labelled by it, although there has been a movement to revive the 'Monguor' identity in recent years. In the Reb kong region, the 'Tu' villages, which speak at least two mutually incomprehensible dialects or languages, have Tibetan Buddhist monasteries belonging to the Dge lugs pa tradition. Tu village ritual has close resemblances to Tibetan village ritual, including versions of the famous *Klu rol* (*klu rol, glu rol*), the big annual festivals conducted by village shamans and involving young men entering into possession states (see below).

I have argued elsewhere that it would be useful to see identity in Tibetan regions generally in more fluid and provisional terms (Samuel 1994; see also Samuel 2010). The rigid processes of identity-definition within modern states tend to militate against doing this, as do the complexities of contemporary politics in culturally Tibetan regions. However it is worthwhile asking how the present distribution of ascribed ethnicities came about, and in response to what historical and contemporary pressures. If we looked at Reb kong two hundred years ago, would a much higher proportion of the population have identified as Monguor? Or would the whole question of whether someone was Monguor or Tibetan not have been of much significance?

The specific religious patterns of the region are also worth examining within this context. The Mgo logs people, the archetypically 'wild' A mdo pastoralists who live around the A myes rma chen range, are largely Rnying ma pa Buddhists with a strong attachment to lay tantric forms of religious practice. This is perhaps what one might expect politically, if one thinks for example of James C. Scott's comments on populations outside state formations in his *The Art of Not Being Governed* (Scott 2009), a book on which I have written elsewhere recently (Samuel 2010). The Mgo logs region certainly seems to partake in the characteristics of Scott's 'Zomia,' the somewhat romantically described southeast Asian highland region which Scott regards as the last part of the earth's surface to be effectively subordinated to state control. In recent times, though, the distinguished Rnying ma pa lama Mkhan po 'jigs med phun tshogs has promoted the growth of monasticism in the Mgo logs region with considerable success, perhaps reflecting the reality that even this remote region can no longer escape the power of the Chinese state (Germano 1998).

But what about the situation in more complex regions, where we have a mixture of agricultural villages, monastic centres of political and economic power and affiliated, tribally organised groups of nomadic pastoralists? While one can get a certain sense of how this operates from early twentieth century observers, particularly Robert Ekvall whose novels and travelogue present quite a plausible picture (Ekvall 1952, 1954a, 1981), I do not think that we yet understand pre-modern politics in A mdo at all well.

Clearly there are aspects of A mdo pastoralist (*'brog pa*) society that fit the stateless or acephalous model of tribal society, but we should be aware that, as the British social anthropologists who spent so much time exploring such systems in places like sub-Saharan Africa appreciated, stateless societies are at least as varied as state societies, in some respects more so. Thus while there are commonalities here across A mdo and the wider Tibetan region, there is also a considerable degree of local specificity and difference. Fernanda Pirie has written a number of recent papers on the restructuring of nomadic politics, focusing mainly on the Mgo logs and Sog po areas (Pirie 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2008).

The monasteries are clearly another part of the picture of the premodern political system. Tibetan 'monasteries' (*dgon pa*) can be rather taken for granted, but in fact the term *dgon pa* includes a wide variety of different kinds of institution, varying greatly in size, in the mix of celibate and non-celibate practitioners, and in social function. I tried to understand many years ago, with the somewhat limited sources at that time, how *dgon pa* might in practice do quite different things in different places, as well as doing enough of the same things, in ritual terms for example, to maintain a significant commonality (Samuel 1993). *Dgon pa* can be military outposts, they can be economic agents, they can be guardians and guarantors of trading centres, as well as primarily religious entities.

The majority of large A mdo monasteries belong to the Dge lugs pa tradition, which traces its origins to the disciples of Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419), a lama who was himself born in A mdo, at the location close to the modern city of Xining where Kumbum, one of A mdo's main monasteries, today commemorates his birthplace. As with Dge lugs pa monasticism elsewhere in Tibet, these monasteries have a strong scholarly and philosophical tradition and emphasise monastic celibacy and purity. They are also closely engaged with the Mongolian population both in A mdo and in Mongolia proper, and the rise of Dge lugs pa monasticism in the area, as mentioned earlier, dates from the 16th and 17th centuries, and particularly from the establishment of Dge lugs pa hegemony over much of Tibet in the 1640s as a result of an alliance

between the Fifth Dalai Lama and the Khoshut Mongol chieftain Gushri Khan. This alliance itself was part of a wider series of links between Dge lugs pa monasteries and Mongol rulers, and a closer examination of the Dge lugs pa *dgon pa* in A mdo shows how significant these rulers were in promoting an establishing the Dge lugs pa style of Tibetan religion.

This clearly had implications for the wider establishment of Tibetan cultural practices in the region, but exactly what it meant for non-elite populations, Mongol, Monguor or Tibetan, is less clear. To the extent that monasteries also became major landowners, they would also have had an increasingly dominant economic and political role in relation to the population. However, the specificity of the pre-modern Dge lugs pa *dgon pa* system in A mdo, with its links both to the distant imperium of the great Dge lugs pa monastic establishment of Central Tibet, and also the more local rule of regional Mongol and Tibetan chieftains in the recent past, still needs plenty of exploration.

We need to bear in mind in this exploration that our sources may themselves represent a process of historical reimagining comparable to that sketched by Alexander Gardner for the context of Khams (Gardner 2009). Texts such as the famous *A mdo chos 'byung* (also known as the *Mdo smad chos 'byung* or *Deb ther rgya mtsho*) by Brag dgon pa Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas (1800–1866) have their own historical and mythical perspective on the growth of monasticism in A mdo. We need to be cautious about taking them as literal historical narratives (see Chayet 2002).

Detailed historical investigation nevertheless provides an avenue to disentangle rhetoric, ideology and reality, and Paul Nietupski's historical work on Labrang, the largest of all these A mdo monastic centres, has made major contributions in this area (Nietupski 2011). His chapter in the present collection adds to this through an examination of the role of Labrang in the politics and governance of the A mdo region. Hildegard Diemberger's paper at the Cardiff conference provided further insights into the relationship between monastery and affiliated nomadic territories (cf. Diemberger 2011). Rabsal's study, in this volume, of a key figure in the recent history of Rong bo dgon chen also adds to our knowledge of this side of A mdo Buddhism.

The large Dge lugs pa institutions are reconfiguring drastically in the present day, in relation to the Chinese state's demands, and also the religious concerns of both Tibetan and Han Chinese. Charlene Makley has written at length on recent transformations at Labrang (e.g. Makley 2003, 2005, 2007); Jane Caple's chapter in the present volume adds to our understanding of these developments (see also Caple 2010). These studies

demonstrate how the monasteries have become key locations for the processes of renegotiation of morality and identity that accompany A mdo's incorporation into the Chinese state.

Lay Tantrics, Rnying Ma Pa and Bon Communities in Reb Kong

The Rnying ma pa and Bon communities and their associated lay tantric practitioners (*sngags pa, sngags ma*) are the other major component of institutional Buddhism in Reb kong. Our collection includes four chapters (Stoddard, Dhondup, Sihlé, Millard) dealing primarily with this aspect of religion in Reb kong; a fifth paper given at the workshop, by Tiina Hyytiäinen, is not included here (Hyytiäinen 2011; see also Hyytiäinen 2010).

As with Dge lugs pa monasticism in A mdo, we are only beginning to get a historical sense of the development of the Rnying ma pa/Bon/lay tantric pattern in the Reb kong region. The Rnying ma pa tradition (*rnying ma* = 'old') views itself as going back to the early days of Tibetan Buddhism at the time of the Tibetan Empire, and more specifically the activity of the great Indian Tantric teacher Padmasambhava (Gu ru Padma byung gnas, Gu ru Rin po che) at the time of the pro-Buddhist Emperor Khri srong lde'u btsan, who lived in the late eighth century. While the first Tibetan monastery, Bsam yas, was established at this time, and both Padmasambhava and Khri srong lde'u btsan were intimately involved with its foundation, Buddhist monasticism more or less disappeared from Tibet with the collapse of the Tibetan Empire in the early ninth century, and Tantric Buddhism appears to have continued in somewhat fragmentary form as a body of practices continued by hereditary lay Tantric practitioners.

The Bon po, who had their own lineages of hereditary lay Tantric practitioners, regarded themselves as continuing the pre-Buddhist religious traditions of the Imperial period, which they viewed as originating in the kingdom of Zhang zhung in present day Western Tibet, and before that in the activity of the Bon po equivalent to the historical Buddha Śākyamuni in the perhaps largely mythical realm of 'Ol mo lung ring further to the West (Kvaerne 1995; Karmay and Watt 2007; Samuel 2000: 666–7; Samuel 2011). The key Bon figure parallel to Padmasambhava was Dran ma nam mkha', regarded by Buddhists as one of Padmasambhava's disciples but by Bon po as Padmasambhava's father or elder brother. Both Padmasambhava and Dran pa nam mkha' are said to have visited Reb kong, and there is a tradition of eight early Rnying ma pa hermitages in the region founded by eight disciples of Lha lung dpal gyi rdo rje, himself one of Padmasambhava's students (Dhondup 2009).

As far as we can tell, both the Rnying ma pa and Bon po began took form as coherent traditions in the late tenth and eleventh centuries, although some degree of continuity with the early Empire probably existed in both cases. At this time, the discovery of *gter ma* (texts, practices and objects believed to have been concealed physically or within human consciousness during the Imperial period) developed as a key way of building up a body of ritual traditions and associated textual material (Germano 1994; Davidson 2003, 2003; Martin 2001; Blezer 2010, 2011). This was also the time when a variety of 'new' (*gsar ma*) Tantric lineages were being introduced from India, and the *gter ma* process seems to have allowed for the reshaping of the fragmentary heritage of ritual practice from the Imperial period into two new forms, one presenting itself as an authentic Buddhist tradition from the Imperial period, the other as a competing Tibetan nativist tradition.

The *gsar ma* lineages, including the Sa skya pa and Bka gdams pa who as we have seen were active in A mdo in the 13th and 14th centuries, were responsible for the effective establishment of monasticism as a major component of Tibetan Buddhism. While some *gsar ma* traditions encouraged lay yogi practice and maintained hereditary lama lineages alongside the newly evolving reincarnate-lama system, village-level lay Tantric practitioners throughout most of the Tibetan region were primarily affiliated with the Rnying ma pa and Bon. Rnying ma pa and Bon gradually developed their own monastic traditions, which continued in parallel with the lay tantric component, but until recent times these monasteries tended to be relatively small-scale. Thus the mix of small to medium size monasteries and lay tantric practitioners characteristic of Reb kong is in many respects not particularly surprising or unusual. One can find a similar pattern in various other parts of the Tibetan cultural region, for example in highland Nepal or eastern Bhutan (cf. Samuel 1993).

Reb kong nevertheless has its own specific character, and we can ask, for example, why this pattern survived and thrived until modern times in this region alongside the apparently later pattern of large-scale monasticism. One of the most striking feature of the A mdo lay tantrics, at least in the Reb kong area, is their relatively large-scale organisation, most conspicuous in the periodic gatherings of the Buddhist *sngags mang* community. Stoddard's article in this collection presents a biographical account of the founding figure of the *sngags mang* organisational structure, Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis (1688–1743), and gives important insights into his historical context and activities. Dhondup's article examines the emergence of Rnying ma pa monasticism in Reb kong, focusing on the activity

of a somewhat later figure, Spyang lung dpal chen nam mkha' 'jigs med (1757–1821), and the *bca' yig* or monastic charters that lay down the rules of discipline for monk and lay tantric members of these communities. Millard discusses the Bon po lay tantric tradition, which has considerable similarities to that of the Rnying ma pa.

The *sngags mang* tradition has become quite well known in recent years, particularly through the work of the Ngakmang Research Institute directed by Hūṃ chen Lce nag tshang in Xining, which has been responsible for publishing a substantial amount of literature associated with the *sngags mang* tradition, and through the teaching activity in the West of two representatives of the Reb kong *sngags pa* tradition, Lama Tharchin and Dr Nida Chenaktsang. While this work has led to a ready access to material associated with the tradition, it is again important to see the Reb kong *sngags pa* today in their contemporary context, rather than to take them at face value as an uncomplicated continuation of the pre-modern situation. Nicholas Sihlé's article in the present collection is particularly valuable as a view of the complexities of identity politics and economic factors in contemporary village-level *sngags pa* practice.

Possession, Spirit Mediums, Folk Religion

A final focus of attention in this volume is the area of spirit possession, spirit mediumship and shamanism.[2] The annual *klu rol* festivals performed in many Reb kong villages, with their associated *lha pa* (spirit mediums/shamans) have by now gained considerable fame and notoriety as tourist occasions. They have also acquired something of a scholarly literature, with significant contributions from Larry Epstein, Katia Buffetrille, and Kevin Stuart and his Tibetan associates, among others (Epstein and Peng 1998; Buffetrille 2002, 2004, 2008; Stuart et al. 1995; Dpal-ldan-bkra-shis and Stuart 1998; Snying bo rgyal and Rino 2008). The *klu rol* is nevertheless a puzzling occasion. Some elements of these festivals have parallels elsewhere in the Tibetan cultural region, but others seem much more local in character. While spirit possession and/or mediumship are by no means unusual in Tibetan culture, mass possession, as with the young men who

[2] I do not mean to imply a rigid distinction between these three terms, and in fact feel that such a distinction makes little sense in the Tibetan context (Samuel 1993). The term *lha pa*, like related terms such as *dpa' bo* and *mkha' 'gro ma*, has been variously translated in the Tibetanist literature as 'spirit medium' and 'shaman'.

are described as going into trance states in *klu rol*, is much less common, and the use of knives and skewers in the rituals is also not usual in Tibetan contexts.

One obvious context of the *klu rol* is the ethnic complexity, and this has of course been picked up by Katia Buffetrille, for example in her Khri ka paper (Buffetrille 2002). As Buffetrille's work suggests, the role of regional mountain gods is significant in terms both of wider Reb kong identity and of relationships between the various ethnic groups in the area. It is tempting to look for further explanations of the particular features of *klu rol* in the specific political and historical context of Reb kong, but the scholarly literature up to this point has had only limited success in providing a convincing account of how and why *klu rol* might have come about. Makley's chapter in the present volume goes a long way towards making sense of the *klu rol*, and will be an essential reference for further work in this area, enabling us to begin to see, as she puts it, "beyond the 'freeze-frames' of most tourist and state portrayals". Her emphasis on understanding the "politics of presence" that motivates and structures *klu rol* and other ritual occasions in Reb kong provides a valuable new emphasis and context in relation to much of the work on Reb kong so far.

If mass possession or trance (using these terms fairly loosely) is a component of the *klu rol*, something rather similar has developed in recent years in another major local context of ritual performance, that of Bon po *'cham* (Tantric ritual dance). Here those involved are typically women. While male possession in the context of *klu rol* seems to be today unremarkable for local people, female individual or group trance at *'cham* performances seems to be a more problematic issue. In current Reb kong discourse, these occasions are framed not as possession by local deities but as *byin rlabs*, a manifestation of the blessing or grace of the Tantric deities. Dawn Collins' article provides a detailed exploration of this intriguing situation, which again has few direct parallels elsewhere in the Tibetan region.

The growth of female trance behaviour fits well however with Makley's emphasis on the 'politics of presence' and with the related emphasis in a number of the contributions included here on understanding religious behaviour in contemporary Reb kong in terms of the complex, difficult and contested situation of Reb kong today, in which the increasing commodification of Tibetan culture as tourist spectacle co-exists uneasily with the stressful and conflicted nature of Reb kong life under contemporary Chinese rule. The tensions of life for Tibetans in Reb kong today were demonstrated all too clearly by the 2008 protests and the subsequent state response, and by the current series of self-immolations by A mdo Tibetans,

of which several of the most recent instances took place in Reb kong.[3] One can only hope that the present tragic cycle of protest and repression will be followed by a time in which the various peoples and communities of the Reb kong region will be able to live together in a freer and more peaceful way.

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[3] On the self-immolation of Jamyang Palden, a young monk at Rong bo monastery, on 14 March 2012, see e.g. http://www.voanews.com/tibetan-english/news/Tibetan-Monk-Self-Immolates-in-Rebkong-Thousandss-Gather-to-Pray-and-Protest-Exclusive-Video-and-Photos-142622016.html (accessed 27 June 2012). Sonam Dhargye, a 43-year old Tibetan farmer, burnt himself to death at an intersection near the vegetable market in Rong bo town a few days later, on 17 March (http://www.tibetanreview.net/news.php?id=10502, accessed 27 June 2012). A number of others have followed since.

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DGE LUGS PA MONASTERIES IN REB KONG AND ITS NEIGHBOURING PLACES

REMEMBERING MONASTIC REVIVAL: STORIES FROM REB KONG AND WESTERN BA YAN

Jane Caple

Introduction

The speed and extent of the Dge lugs pa monastic revival has been one of the most extraordinary aspects of the Tibetan Buddhist resurgence in the PRC following the repression of the Maoist era. Thus far, accounts of this revival have largely been framed in relation to the Chinese state and the shifting public space for religion. They have either been directly concerned with state-society relations and the negotiation of religious space by elites or have emphasised the political dimensions of Dge lugs pa revival. This study aims to move the discussion beyond this framework by exploring emic perspectives, building on the work of Diemberger and Makley, both of whom employ oral histories as a methodological tool. The collecting of narratives from people who have been involved in the process of monastic revival and development 'makes it possible to construct a "history from below", otherwise consigned to oblivion' (Diemberger, 2010: 113).

The present study examines oral and written narratives of the early reform years in Reb kong and Western Ba yan in eastern A mdo, produced by monks who were involved in the process of monastic revival.[1] Their rememberings add depth and texture to our knowledge of this period, contributing new empirical details and, moreover, an understanding beyond that contained within the narrative frame of state-society

[1] This study is based on narratives collected in 2008–2009 at 16 monasteries in Reb kong and western Ba yan and at Sku 'bum monastery. The research resulted in my dissertation on the subject of Dge lugs pa monastic revival and development in A mdo (Caple, 2011). I would like to thank the monks who shared their knowledge, stories, and opinions; Lama Jabb for his help in checking my translations from Tibetan and his valuable comments; and Charlene Makley, Nicolas Sihlé, Hildegard Diemberger, Flemming Christiansen and Tim Wright for their comments on topics explored in this chapter. The support of the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) is gratefully acknowledged. This work was undertaken by the White Rose East Asia Centre (WREAC).

relations.[2] These rememberings are also significant as subjective interpretive representations of the past. They are relational, both shaped by and shaping practices (actions, speech, thoughts, perceptions, feelings) of the situated present; and are among the repertoire of resources that individuals and communities draw upon in their negotiation of their futures.

This chapter explores both the descriptive and relational dimensions of monks' narratives. It sheds new light on the beginnings of the revival through the stories of three monks who were among the first of the younger generation to enter the re-opened monasteries. It then examines more broadly the 'revival' of monasticism in the early 1980s, exploring themes emerging from written and oral recollections of monks and the 'significant events' as narrated by them. The final section turns to a discussion of the evaluations embedded in monks' narratives between the early reform years as a moral past and the immoral present. It explores the ways in which nostalgic rememberings can work as a productive aspect of present practice (in the sense of 'action'), both affirming the legitimacy of the revival, but also creating ethical space for change. However, before moving on to a discussion of the Dge lugs 'revival' in Reb kong and Western Ba yan, it is important to briefly outline the historical context of 'mass monasticism' and the enforced reordering of society and closure of the monasteries during the Maoist period.

'Mass Monasticism' and the Social Reordering of the Maoist Period

One of the main characteristics of the Dge lugs pa tradition, developed from the thought of Tsong kha pa (1357–1419), is its emphasis on celibate monasticism. As the other chapters in this volume show, celibate monasticism is not the essential determinant of religious authority in Tibetan Buddhism and there are a wide variety of religious practitioners, including the Rnying ma *sngags pa*. However, with the political ascendancy of the Dge lugs pa, which became pervasive in A mdo in the 16th century (Tuttle, 2010: p. 27), monasticism was encouraged on a massive scale (Kapstein, 2006: p. 219).

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[2] I have chosen to use the term 'rememberings' rather than 'memories' here to convey a sense of these narratives as an active process of recall and exposition within a situated ethnographic encounter. The term 'memories' by contrast conveys a sense of 'something remembered'.

Goldstein (1989; 1998a; 2009) has referred to the particular form of monasticism which emerged under the hegemony of the Dge lugs pa as a philosophy or ideology of 'mass monasticism', defined as 'an emphasis on recruiting and sustaining very large numbers of celibate monks for their entire lives' (2009: 1). Prior to the Maoist years, a significant proportion of the Tibetan male population were monks (although varying from area to area), many of whom belonged to an extensive inter-connected network of Dge lugs pa institutions.[3]

Reb kong, although retaining a strong Rnying ma pa tradition, was a Dge lugs pa 'monastic polity' (Makley, 2007). The Shar tshang lineage, head of Rong bo monastery since the 17th century, exercised joint religious and political authority with the Rong bo *nang so* over the 12 districts of Reb kong.[4] Its political structure was thus based on the principle of combined religious and secular rule, centred on the legitimating authority of a particular reincarnation lineage in alliance with secular leaders. Its ideological, political and economic structures supported the recruitment and maintenance of large numbers of males in lifelong celibate monastic life. According to Chinese statistics, in 1954, monks (over 90 per cent of whom were Dge lugs pa) constituted 14 per cent of the total population of Reb kong county (Pu, 1990: 430). Its main Dge lugs pa seat, Rong bo, was one of the largest monasteries in A mdo, housing up to 2,300 monks at its peak (Sonam Tsering, 2011) and with 36 affiliate monasteries in the Reb kong area and many others beyond (Dpal bzang, 2007: 58–59).

Travelling roughly 60 km north from Rong bo as the crow flies and crossing the Yellow River, we arrive at the historically famous Bya khyung monastery, perched on a mountain ridge in the western part of Ba yan (Ch. Hualong) Hui Autonomous County, a mountainous area in the

[3] The actual number of monks is not known; it is likely that the proportion of males who were monks varied considerably from area to area. Goldstein's (2009) latest work gives an estimate of 20 to 30 per cent based on figures provided by both the Tibetan government-in-exile (20 to 30 per cent) and Chinese government (24 per cent). This is higher than Goldstein's (1998b: 5) previous estimate of 10 to 15 per cent. Samuel (1993, 309: 578–582) previously argued that assumptions that 25 per cent or more of the male population were monks appeared to be 'greatly exaggerated'. Based on what he considered to be the most reliable ethnographic sources (dealing with monastic populations in Dingri, Sakya and Ladakh), he estimated that in centralised agricultural areas 10 to 12 per cent of the male population were monks and in other areas the proportion would have been considerably lower.

[4] *Reb kong shog khag bcu gnyis*, roughly analogous to today's Reb kong (Ch. Tongren) and Rtse khog (Ch. Zeku) counties. Rong bo also had patron communities extending into Gcan tsha (Ch. Jianza) and Sog po (Ch. Henan) in Rmal ho, and Mtsho lho (Ch. Hainan) TAP and Ba yan, referred to as the '18 outer divisions (*phyi gshog bco brgyad*).

southern half of Haidong prefecture. More than 50,000 Tibetans live in the county (21 per cent of its population), concentrated in its eastern and western areas. Western Ba yan is best known for Bya khyung monastery, where Tsong kha pa trained before travelling to Lhasa;[5] and Dhi tsha, a relatively new monastery (founded 1903) that nevertheless became an important centre of Buddhist practice and scholarship.[6] Both monasteries at their peak housed up to 3,000 monks, although less than 1,000 by the mid-1950s.

At the end of the 1970s, when restrictions on religious practice were relaxed, there were no working monasteries: they had all been disbanded during the Maoist campaigns of the late 1950s and the Cultural Revolution and most had been destroyed. Any surviving monastery buildings in Reb kong and western Ba yan were being used as state work offices, granaries or dwellings and the sites had been turned over to use as agricultural land, grazing pasture, forest or housing for cadres and villagers.

In A mdo, 1958 represents the pivotal historical moment in popular discourse and culture rather than the Communist 'liberation' of 1949, or the Cultural Revolution.[7] In much that is written about modern Tibetan history (which tends to focus on events in central Tibet) the year 1959 is presented as the turning point, with the uprising against Chinese rule in Lhasa and the 14th Dalai Lama's flight into exile marking the end of gradualist policies. However, in A mdo, the imposition of communisation of agricultural and pastoral areas, violent class struggle, and the closure of monasteries in 1958 was a point of social rupture. These enforced 'democratic reforms' resulted in large-scale revolt, which was violently suppressed (Smith, 1994: 67).

This is not to suggest that CCP rule had had no affect on the lives of Tibetans until 1958. There was resistance and rebellion when 'democratic reforms' were first announced in A mdo and in Khams in 1956. However, events under CCP rule up to this period, like other episodes in the tumultuous local history of the twentieth century (such as the violence in Reb kong and Ba yan during the time of Ma Bufang), did not fundamentally disrupt the social order. Under the United Front policy of the 1950s,

[5] Bya khyung bshad sgrub gling (Ch. Xiaqiongsi).

[6] Dhi tsha bkra shis chos sdings dgon pa (Ch. Zhizhashangsi; Zhazhadasi). Alternative spellings of Lde tsha and Rdi tsha are also found in Tibetan sources (Tuttle 2010 p. 33).

[7] See, for example, the song *1958–2008* (Bkra shis don 'grub, 2008) which compares the two 'terrifying' times of 1958 and 2008, starting with the verse: 'Hey! / The year of 1958, / is when the black enemy entered Tibet, / is when the lamas were put in prison.' See also Makley (2007: 105).

local elites were incorporated into the new administrative structures. For example, the 7th Shar tshang was appointed head of the Rma lho TAP government when it was established in 1953 (Qinghai Sheng Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui ed., 2001: 510).

The 'democratic reforms' of 1958, however, entailed a forced reorganisation of society and a radical displacement of Dge lugs pa monastic authority. Many reincarnate lamas and monks (particularly the highly educated) were 'struggled against' and imprisoned and the other monks were forced to disrobe and return to lay life. In 1962, some monks returned to the larger monastic centres in A mdo, including Bla brang (Slobodnik, 2004: 9), Sku 'bum (Arjia Rinpoche, 2010: 52–53) and Rong bo, Dhi tsha, Mgar rtse[8] and Bya khyung in Reb kong and Western Ba yan, all of which maintained relatively small monastic populations until the Cultural Revolution started in 1966; but this did not represent a return to previous social structures. The Cultural Revolution represented a further period of violent and traumatic social upheaval, but 1958 with its radical social reordering is the point that demarcates the 'old' and 'new' societies.[9]

The Beginnings of Monastic Revival: A Shift from Private to Public Practice

The speed and extent of the Dge lugs pa revival in the 1980s was extraordinary. Although numbers never reached pre-1958 levels, there was nevertheless a revival of 'mass' monasticism, with a 'more is better' ethic to monastic population growth (see also Makley, 2007: 82). In 1999, the Reb kong county government reported 1819 monks in the county (Kolås and Thowsen, 2005: 207). If this figure is compared with the 2000 census data (Qinghai Sheng Renkou Pucha Bangongshi, 2003: 82–85, 102–105), over five per cent of the population of Tibetan males in the county were monks by the end of the 1990s.[10] Of these an estimated 90 per cent or more were

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8 Full name: Mgar rtse gya sa dgon thub bstan chos 'khor gling (Ch. Guashezisi).

9 For accounts of the Maoist period at Sku 'bum and in Bla brang see Arjia Rinpoche (2010: 31–87) and Makley (2007: 76–134). Monks continued to live on some monastery sites including Sku 'bum, but were engaged in productive labour and unable to live and practice openly as monks.

10 This includes those officially classified as Monguor (Ch. *tuzu*), 12 per cent of the county's male population. Official population and monastic population statistics are problematic, but as the only available data they nevertheless give an indication of the extent of repopulation. They may reflect under-reporting as a result of unregistered births and unregistered monks. The number of monks may have included men from outside Reb kong resident at the monastic training centres of Rong bo and Mgar rtse. Even taking this

Dge lugs pa monks.[11] The monastic centres of Bya khyung and Dhi tsha also experienced rapid re-population. At Dhi tsha, ten monks gathered in one of the remaining monks' quarters to hold the first ritual assembly; by the following year there were about 60 monks; by the mid-1990s the assembly had grown to around 300.[12]

The monastic revival has generally been theorised as a response to the violence of the Cultural Revolution (Makley, 2007; Goldstein, 1994) and/or an expression of Tibetan identity, with monasteries coming to signify Tibetan nationhood and survival (Schwartz, 1994: *passim*; Goldstein, 1998a; see also Kolås and Thowsen, 2005: 92). However, despite the social rupture and state-sponsored violence of the late 1950s and the Cultural Revolution, the subsequent 'revival' of Buddhism did not represent a complete break with the recent past; there were continuities.

It is generally known that there were reincarnate lamas and monks who maintained religious traditions during the Maoist period. Although many of the men who had been monks died between 1958 and 1980, went into exile or married and had children, there were individuals who survived and maintained their vows and practices privately. Some lived out these years as hermits, hiding in remote places. More commonly, monks lived a double life in the communes or labour camps, living in what Wynot (2002: 67) refers to in her study of secret monasticism during the 1930s in the USSR, as a 'state of spiritual monasticism'. At one monastery in Reb kong a few monks were able to stay at the monastery site, acting as caretakers for the vegetable gardens and tree plantations over to which the monastery land had been turned. A khu Ye shes[13] told me that during the Cultural Revolution he wore lay clothes, but was able to stay in a quarter that had not been destroyed, joking that: 'Because I was called

into consideration, the majority of the county's monks would have been resident at 'local' branch monasteries and practice centres populated by boys and men from their patron communities (*lha sde*) in Reb kong. Moreover, the assemblies of many of these monasteries were already shrinking by the turn of the century (Caple, 2011).

[11] This figure is based on the proportion of Dge lugs pa to non-Dge lugs pa monks in the late 1980s, early 1990s and 2000s, calculated from data in Pu (1990), Nian and Bai (1993) and Dpal bzang (2007).

[12] There is discrepancy in the sources as to the year in which the monastery reopened. The monastery's leaflet (Zhizhadasi, n.d.) and website (Zhizhadasi, 2004) say it reopened in 1981. This was also the date given by two of the senior monks I interviewed. According to Nian and Bai (2003: 54) the monastery reopened in February 1980; Pu (1990: 93) writes that it received official approval to reopen in 1980. When I went back to my sources, I was told that the first monks returned in the second lunar month of 1980 and the monastery was granted official permission to reopen in the 11th lunar month of that year (personal communication with a key informant, June 2011).

[13] All personal names have been changed. A khu is the polite form of address for a monk.

"working class" by Chairman Mao my house was not destroyed. Chairman Mao indeed gave special treatment to the working class!'.[14]

When the new policy of freedom of religious belief was announced in Reb kong and western Ba yan, these men returned to the sites of their monasteries, although it took longer for collective monastic activities to resume. Referred to by my interlocutors as 'elders (*rgan pa*)',[15] they were instrumental in the Tibetan Buddhist revival, providing the unbroken transmission of teachings and practice and the authority to reconsecrate monastic sites, re-establish ritual, education and practice and, crucially, to ordain new monks.

However, the return of the elders was not the only thread of continuity. During the 1970s at least there were also some boys who became monks secretly, studying and practising privately with older monks. Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho told me how he came to be a monk during the 1970s. His story shows the instability of individual trajectories through state-defined spaces despite the social rupture of the Maoist period. He came from a rich family and his father had to 'wear the paper cap' during the class struggle of the Maoist period.[16] He thought his family were very bad and did not understand why they were so rich. As a result of his family's position he did not have an opportunity to go to school and when he was a child he had to go out and work. He then went to stay with a relative with whom he studied *Lam rim*:

> At that time, we became monks secretly and wore lay clothing. There was an amazing *dge bshes* in X village. We went there and became monks in the night because we should not be seen during the day time.... The monks told us that, even if it is difficult to study, we should become monks and one day the *Dharma* door will be re-opened. At that time I did not know what a monastery was, but I stayed like that [as a secret monk] in expectation [that religious practice would be revived].

The continuity of teaching and practice through personal relationships between elder monks and young boys is also evident in Blo bzang bstan dar's life history:

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[14] *gral rim 'byor med* (literally the class without wealth).

[15] A *rgan pa* is an elder in terms of age and/or seniority and can be used in reference to both monks and lay people. The term was also used more specifically by my interlocutors as shorthand for monks who were ordained prior to 1958. These men were not necessarily that 'old' in 1980. I was told that the youngest *rgan pa* at Rong bo was only 35 when the monastery reopened.

[16] In other words he was labelled a class enemy. 'Wearing the paper cap' refers to the practice of making class enemies wear a tall paper cap on their heads (see, for example, MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006: Illustration 21).

> I became a monk at home. My teacher was a monk even in the 1950s. . . . He was my father's older brother. . . . I stayed with him from the age of 7 or 8. In summer, when he went to the nomads' grasslands he had a small house in which I served him. I fetched water and collected fuel. He taught me scriptures on the refuge practice and *The Hundred Deities of Tushita* [guru yoga practice] and so on, and I recited them in his presence. In autumn, I went back to the Chinese school and finished primary and [middle] school in the county town. Then Buddhism was revived in 1980 and I became a monk.

Bsod nams rgya mtsho told a very similar story, describing how, even though there were no monasteries, he was socialised into monastic, rather than household life from a young age.

> I spent my childhood living with my brother and uncle and so I had stayed with these two monks since I was a young boy. I didn't wear the monastic robes or anything, but I didn't experience secular family life. . . . I went to the primary school when I was young and was planning to go to the [Tibetan nationalities teacher training] school and stayed there for a month with a teacher. I took all the exams but didn't go to the school. At that time there were no monasteries but Sku 'bum was beginning to re-emerge. Then I didn't go to school and decided to become a monk. I was staying with my uncle and brother and so I came here when the monastery was restored and was ordained in 1981.

These monks were among the first of the 'younger' generation to enter monasteries in the early 1980s. Thus, for some young men at least, the revival of monasticism represented a shift from private to public practice. They had been socialised as and understood themselves to be 'monks' even when there were no monasteries. Their stories highlight the importance of interpersonal relationships between young men and older monks, reflecting not only the contexts of a time when formal, public monastic life was prohibited, but also the traditional system of Dge lugs pa monastic training. The importance of kinship relationships in these men's lives, each of whom lived with an older relative who was a monk, is also rooted in monastic traditions. When monks first enter a monastery, particularly if they are young, they stay with an older monk, their home teacher, who introduces them to the rules and life of the monastery and ensures they memorise the texts required to enter the monastic assembly.[17] A young monk serves his home teacher, cleaning the quarters, cooking and doing other household chores, and gives his home teacher any income (food,

[17] This is as distinct from the teacher/student relationships that monks form with their textual and tantric teachers.

money) to manage. Many of my interlocutors said that when they joined their monastery their home teacher was a relative, or it was a relative who introduced them.[18]

Monastic Revival as a Social Process

These three monks' shift from private to public practice and the return of the elders reflects the shifting public space for monasticism. The revival of religion in A mdo in the late 1970s and early 1980s occurred within the same general policy contexts as elsewhere in China. The policy of freedom of religious belief was restored following the Third Plenum of the 11th CCP central committee in December 1978, which led to a relaxation of Party policy on religion (Potter, 2003: 13). It was announced in Reb kong in autumn 1979 (Dpal bzang, 2007: 23). The official summary of CCP religious policy was subsequently set out in Document 19 (issued in March 1982),[19] and enshrined in the revised PRC Constitution (adopted in December 1982). The revival was also situated within the context of indicators of change felt in all Tibetan areas in the PRC: the rehabilitation and state patronage of religious leaders, signalling a return to the United Front policy of the 1950s; renewed contact between Tibetans in the PRC and Tibetans in exile and the return of some exiled religious leaders; contact between representatives of the Dalai Lama and Beijing; and the visit of Party Secretary Hu Yaobang to Tibet in May 1980 (see Goldstein, 1997: 61–73; Shakya, 1999: 371–393; Kapstein, 2004: 239–240; Makley, 2007: 135–136). Several of my interlocutors cited the 10th Panchen Lama's 1980 tour of A mdo as a significant signal of change.

However, the Dge lugs pa revival in the 1980s was contingent not only on the re-opening of a public space for monasticism, but also upon a social reordering and the re-formation or resurgence of the moral community underpinning monasticism in general and in the particular 'mass' form revived at this time. The popular view of the Buddhist monk as an ascetic individual who renounces the world (i.e. society) elides the social relationships that are foundational to monasticism (see also Mills, 2003:

[18] This also serves as a support system for older monks. One reason a household might send a boy to the monastery is to take care of an older relative who is a monk.

[19] Full name: *Shehuizhuyi shiqi zongjiao wenti de jiben guandian he jiben zhengce [The basic viewpoint and policy on the religious question during our country's socialist period]* (trans. MacInnis, 1989: 10–26).

54–63; Robson, 2010: 3–8). The existence and continuity of monasticism is contingent upon the dependent relationship between and shared values of monastic and lay communities, the latter providing not just material support, but also the monastic population.

Thus monastic revival involved the reinscription of the social and spatial boundaries between lay and monastic communities that underpin the ethical relationship between monks (in their roles as a field of merit and providers of ritual services) and the laity (in their role as patrons). This was evident in two themes running through monks' written and oral recollections of this time: the public performance of monkhood through the wearing of the monastic robes (a symbolic re-separation of the monastic and lay communities) and the reclamation of monastic space (the spatial re-separation of the monastic and lay communities). These aspects of the revival emerged from monks' narratives as gradual processes rather than 'events'.

The Monastic Robes

> *When A lags Kha so arrived at the monastery, he was wearing a dark brown lambskin robe and a yellow shirt and was riding a white horse. At that time only one or two monks wore monastic robes.*
>
> —Senior monk recalling the revival of Rong bo monastery in 1980.

A lags Kha so,[20] was the first of Reb kong's senior reincarnate lamas to return to Rong bo monastery following the provincial government's declaration of the new policy of freedom of religious belief in autumn 1979. He arrived at the monastery in January 1980 and consecrated the assembly hall (Dpal bzang, 2007: 24). The evocative account of his return quoted at the beginning of this section was given by a senior monk at Rong bo. His very simple description of clothing expresses the liminality of this moment of arrival, a point of disjuncture between the traumatic past and the present social world. The lama had returned to the monastery, but he still wore the attire of a layman; there were 'monks', but few wore monks' robes.

The re-emergence of the public performance of monkhood through the wearing of the monastic robes was an important element in the reordering of Tibetan social worlds in the early 1980s. The robe, along with a shaved

[20] The 7th Kha so (kha so sku phreng bdun pa blo bzang 'jigs med 'phrin las) born in 1930.

head, is what immediately identifies an individual as a monk, reminding the monk of his commitment to the Buddhist path and enabling the layperson to respond in a socially appropriate manner. Individual elements of the robes and the way in which they are worn symbolise various aspects of Buddhist doctrine and practice. For monks, the robes therefore embody 'the qualities of both Buddhist soteriology and monastic discipline and responsibility, literally swathing them in their religious vocation' (Mills, 2003: 41). For Tibetans, the wearing of monastic robes is the most important marker of identity and distinction between lay and monastic status, rather than the distinction between a novice (*dge tshul*) and a fully ordained monk (*dge slong*) (Makley, 2005: 272).[21]

The putting on of the robes was described as one of the significant acts in the revival of Rong bo monastery in a published account of events at Rong bo written by a Rong bo monk (Dpal bzang, 2007: 24). Rong bo's head (*dgon bdag*) lama, Shar tshang, had died in prison and the 6th Rdzong chung was to be enthroned as regent.[22] Dpal bzang describes how, in February 1980, A lags Rdzong chung came to Rong bo, 'in accordance with the wishes of the faithful monks and lay people of Reb kong'. His arrival was marked by the appearance of 'a rainbow and other auspicious signs'. This was followed by the events marking the beginning of the revival of monastic life (the 'opening of the *Dharma* doors').

> On 26th February, the great 6th Rdzong chung, the 7th Kha so Rinpoche, ... [and other reincarnate lamas and leading monks] put on the red robes, the Vajra holder Rdzong chung Rin po che gave a teaching of the *Prātimokṣa sūtra* and an auspicious restoration and purification of the vows ceremony was held, and the *Dharma* doors were first opened (Dpal bzang 2007, p. 24).[23]

However, the wearing of monastic robes was a gradual process, at least in Reb kong and western Ba yan. A khu Chos 'phel told me that at Rong bo monastery it was five or six years before all of the monks wore robes and that he himself had continued to wear lay clothes and work for some months before he donned the monastic costume. The social re-ordering of the Maoist period had involved a fundamental shift in the public symbolism of the robes. As elsewhere in China, space for the revival of religious

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[21] Contrary to Makley's findings at Bla brang, in some monasteries the robe is altered to denote status as a fully ordained monk (see also Mills, 2003: 43). Monks who have taken the vows of a *ri khrod pa* wear a yellow upper shawl (*gzan gser po*).

[22] Rdzong chung sku phreng drug pa 'jigs med mkhas btsun lung rigs rgya mtsho (1923–1988).

[23] See Section 3 for a fuller discussion of Dpal bzang (2007).

activities was created not just through shifting policies, but also a growing confidence amongst individuals that these policies were not simply a strategic trick.

Reclaiming Monastic Space

It did not seem like a monastery, but like a village.
—A *dge bshes* remembering Rong bo monastery in 1984.

In Reb kong, Rong bo was the first monastery to officially reopen. The elders from its affiliate monasteries assembled there along with some new monks. When the affiliate monasteries were reopened, monks returned to their own monasteries and collective activities resumed, sometimes without formal government permission.

The reclamation of monastic space and remaking of the spatial boundaries between lay and monastic communities were essential to the resumption of collective monastic life. The initial migration of the elders who had been living in lay communities to their monastic sites was the first step towards this re-separation. However, the story of Rong bo's revival as told by monks shows how (relatively) slow the process of reclamation and re-separation could be.[24] A birds eye view of the present site from the opposite hillside (see Fig. 2.1) contrasts sharply with the image conjured up in oral narratives of the monastery at the end of the 1970s. The few buildings that had not been destroyed in 1958 and during the Cultural Revolution were used as storehouses and the offices of state agencies and the rest of the site was used as government work offices, workshops, schools and homes for Chinese families (see also Dpal bzang, 2007: 23).

Even as monks began to practise publicly and recommence collective monastic activities, it was a long and gradual process before they lived as a separate community and the spatial boundaries between monastery and village/town were re-established. Initially, there were few places for them to stay inside the monastery and many lived in nearby villages. As the Chinese families living in the monastery gradually began to leave, monks moved into the houses they had left behind. Even then they were living alongside the remaining families as their neighbours. Dge bshes Bkra shis,

[24] Unless otherwise indicated, the description in the following paragraphs has been constructed from interviews with monks who entered Rong bo during the 1980s and 1990s.



Fig. 2.1. Rong bo monastery, Reb kong. Photo: Jane Caple, 2009.

a senior scholar and teacher at Rong bo, remarked that when he entered in 1984 'it did not seem like a monastery, but like a village'.

In 1990, the government redistributed the land to the monastery. Monks who joined in the early 1990s said that many Chinese households were still living there at that time; one recalled that they affixed notices to the families' doors informing them that they had to leave. By the mid 1990s the remaining families had left. The monastery Management Committee divided the land and apportioned space for individual monks, whose families then helped them to build quarters. Today, the monastery occupies much of the original site, although part is still occupied by a middle school and village housing. The monks still consider these areas to belong to the monastery.

Monks' rememberings of the reclamation of monastic space not only provide detail and texture to our understanding of the revival. They are also representations grounded within a particular ethical framework. The way in which they talked about their reclamation of monastic space from Chinese householders placed a certain amount of agency with the state. Some referred to the government's re-distribution of land as a contributory factor; after the land was officially handed back they had more leverage to

persuade the families to move. This reclamation of space from 'Chinese' outsiders, viewed as an (incomplete) restitution of monastic rights, was the only context in which monks acknowledged reliance on state agency rather than the monastic moral community.[25]

I heard a similar story at Dhi tsha monastery in Ba yan. When the elders returned to the monastic site, only three monks' quarters and two reincarnate lamas' residences remained. The rest of the site had been turned over to fields and threshing grounds used by Chinese families. The land was gradually handed back. When I asked a senior monk whether there had been any conflict in reclaiming the land, he said that 'since the state distributed the land, there was no conflict'.

By contrast, at a monastery where the monks' quarters had been used by Tibetan herding families, my interlocutor insisted that it was not the government who had returned the land: the people 'gave the houses back to the monastery of their own accord and returned to the grasslands'. This monk's emphasis on the agency exercised by herders in the restoration of monastic space underscores their position as 'insiders'; members of the monastic moral community.

More generally, written and oral accounts of monastic revival in Reb kong and western Ba yan emphasise the active participation and voluntary support of the Tibetan community, not only in the reclamation of space, but also in the reconstruction of monasteries, funding of monastic activities and support for monks. This in part reflects the spontaneous giving of the period; although emerging in new contexts, support for monastic revival (and re-population) in Reb kong and Western Ba yan in the early 1980s represented a mobilisation of patronage networks based on affiliations between lay communities, lamas and monasteries prior to 1958 (Caple, 2011). However, it also reflects a narration of a 'proper' moral-social order. The voluntary nature of giving (whether of monastic property, alms or other gifts) is fundamental to the integrity of the restored monastic moral community, undermined during the violence of the Maoist period in which locals participated (Makley, 2007; Arjia Rinpoche 2010); and the moral legitimacy of monasticism, called into question under State Socialism.

[25] This appeal to state authorities over matters considered 'external' to traditional authorities is also found in other contexts, such as the resolution of boundary disputes resulting from state grassland fencing policies (Pirie, 2006).

Significant Events in Monastic Revival

To further examine the social processes and significant events of the revival from an insider's perspective, I will turn to an account of the destruction and revival of one of Rong bo's branch monasteries, taken from *Reb kong travel notes* (*reb gong yul skor zin tho*) (Dpal bzang, 2007). The text is authored by a member of the social world under discussion, who is himself negotiating multiple identities as a 'modern' 'Tibetan' 'monk'. Taking the monastery as the central subject and foregrounding and repressing particular elements, the author shapes his narrative according to the norms and logics of his social world and narrates the reinscription of the social and spatial boundaries upon which this is based.

The author is a monk senior in the administrative hierarchy of Rong bo monastery and one of the young men who joined the monastery in 1980 at the age of 15. Over 500 pages of the 615 page volume (which took over ten years to produce) are dedicated to Rong bo and 46 other Dge lugs pa, Rnying ma pa and Bon po monasteries in Reb kong. The chapters on Rong bo's affiliate monasteries each follow the same format. They provide an overview of: the history of the monastery, the reincarnation lineage of the head lama, the monastery's sacred buildings and inner objects, the annual rituals, the monastic constitution, the education system, the funding of the main religious festivals and the patron communities. The book is an official publication, published with an ISBN number by Gansu Nationalities Publishing House in 2007.

The monastery is the central subject of the text, marking a departure from traditional monastic histories told through the historiographies of reincarnate lamas (for example, Bshad sgrub rgya mtsho, 1995; 'Jig med theg mchog, 1998). It is also written in a simple and factual style. In an interview, the author said that Dge 'dun chos 'phel, in particular his *Guide to India* (1939, trans. Huber, 2000), was one of his main influences; this is evident in both of the above points. Dpal bzang's other influences were his teacher, who encouraged him to write about the modern history of Rong bo and its affiliate monasteries, and a Western academic with whom he had contact during the 1990s and who had advised him on critical approaches and research methods. His sources include written and oral local histories, prefectural government records and field visits. However, compared to brief factual histories of Rong bo and its branches (Pu, 1990; Nian and Bai, 1993) or the few ethnographic accounts of Tibetan Buddhist monastic revival (e.g. Makley, 2007), his narrative is structured around

the events that are most significant from within a Dge lugs pa monastic world view.

Through its hybrid approach, the narrative, fixed in published written form, thus becomes an alternative 'official' history to traditional accounts framed around the life of great lamas, factual accounts provided in guidebooks, and academic histories. The following extract relates the destruction and reopening of Lower Seng ge gshong monastery.[26] It is a typical example of the author's descriptions of this period for each of Rong bo's affiliate monasteries:

> During the 1958 'democratic reform' campaign and the catastrophic storm of the 1966 Great Cultural Revolution, the statues, scriptures and *mchod rten* of this monastery were destroyed and the monks were expelled to the village. Fortunately, thanks to the protection offered by a few of the leaders of that time, the buildings of the great assembly hall and Maitreya temple were used as Lower Seng ge gshong village's granary and survived in derelict form. The rest of the monastery site was used as a meeting place for Lower Seng ge gshong village and transformed into living quarters for the commune cadres.
>
> In 1980, at the same time as the revival of Buddhism in A mdo, a few monks of this monastery from former times took care of the monastic ruins and settled there. On 27th September of that year, the 10th Panchen Lama Blo bzang phrin las lhun grub chos kyi rgyal mtshan visited this monastery. He gave oral transmissions to the monks and lay people on [the] *maṇi* [mantra], the refuge practice, the three deities of longevity, and so on. He spoke these words of praise: 'That this former assembly hall survived without serious damage is because of the strength of your great faith'. Then he consecrated the assembly hall.
>
> In 1981, a group of reincarnate lamas and *dge bshes* were invited from Rong bo monastery, led by the 6th Rdzong chung Rin po che 'Jigs med mkhas btsun lung rigs rgya mtsho. The auspicious restoration and purification of the vows ceremony was held inside the assembly hall and the *Dharma* door was reopened. After that, under the leadership of the elder monks of former times and several new monks, and with the support of the faithful lay people and monks of this village who donated cash and materials and organised manual labour, gradually the ancient sacred inner objects were collected and those that had been destroyed were remade. Recitation and ritual practices were revived and continued according to tradition. (Dpal bzang, 2007: 260–261).

[26] Seng ge gshong ma mgo dgon dga' ldan phun tshogs gling (Ch. Wutunxiasi).

The author refers to the revival as the 're-dissemination (*yang dar*)' of Buddhism, thereby locating contemporary events within the much longer history of the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, commonly periodised as the early dissemination (*snga dar*) in the seventh century and the later dissemination (*phyi dar*) in the eleventh and twelfth centuries following its persecution and near disappearance in the ninth century.[27]

His subsequent chronology is similar to that in each of his chapters on Rong bo's affiliate monasteries: the return of the elders to the monastery site to take care of the ruins; the visit of a senior reincarnate lama and the consecration of the assembly hall; the restoration and purification of the vows ceremony; the reconstruction of the monastic buildings and sacred inner objects, supported by the lay population; and finally the revival of recitation and ritual practices 'according to tradition'.

Through the presence of senior lamas and monks, the performance of certain rituals (consecration, purification) and the revival of practices 'according to tradition', the monastery's legitimacy is publicly restored according to Dge lugs pa norms, for which demonstrable continuity of practice through transmission and lineage is crucial. Its relationship to its 'mother' monastery is affirmed through the central role played by the 6th Rdzong chung, then regent of Rong bo. The pivotal moment is the holding of the auspicious restoration and purification of the vows ceremony (*bkra shis gso sbyong*). It is only after this that the *Dharma* door is reopened. The *gso sbyong*, held twice monthly, is one of the three most important rituals of monastic discipline (*'dul ba*; Skt: *Vinaya*), without which monastic practice is not possible (Dreyfus, 2003: 320).[28] An auspicious (*bkra shis*) *gso sbyong* is held on a special occasion.

The actors in this narrative are the reincarnate lamas and senior monks who have the authority to reinscribe the monastic space with legitimacy and the monks and lay people who, through their faith, have protected and reconstructed the monastery. The restoration of the monastery is not only performed in the presence of the lay community, but involves their active participation as sponsors. The state, implicitly present in Dpal bzang's references to the 1958 'democratic reform' campaign and the

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27 The author told me that the phrase *bstan pa yang dar* was first used by the 10th Panchen Lama in 1979. Diemberger (2010: 115) also mentions use of this terminology among Tibetans.

28 The others are the summer retreat (*dbyar gnas*) and the end of this retreat (*dgag dbye*) (Dreyfus, 2003: 320).

'catastrophic storm of the 1966 Great Cultural Revolution', is absent in his account of monastic revival.

Dpal bzang's narration reflects the way in which other monks talked about the process of monastic revival. They did not mention negotiations with local officials over permits and permission to re-establish their monasteries unless I specifically asked about this. Rather, they focused on the return of the elders to monastic sites, the reconstitution of their monastic assemblies, the reclamation of monastic space, the reconstruction of the physical fabric of their monasteries and the resumption of monastic rituals and teaching.

Dpal bzang's narration of the revival of Lower Seng ge gshong restores monastic space from profane to sacred and the various actors to their proper place in the ideal integrated social world of the monastery, re-establishing the ethical relationship between monastics and laity. He ascribes agency to (and thereby underscores the continuity of) the monastic moral community during the Maoist period by referring to the protection of monastery buildings by local leaders and the Panchen Lama's words of praise. Within the framework of Buddhist ethics, the tactical manoeuvres of local leaders are moral actions. Their active participation in the transformation of the monastic site from sacred to profane use was a meritorious (rather than immoral) act because it was oriented towards the protection of the monastery and Buddhism. In his accounts of the revival of several other monasteries, Dpal bzang makes similar statements about local leaders protecting monastic buildings by making them useful to socialist construction.

Thus, Dpal bzang is restoring the ideal through his written narrative of revival. Yet, in discussions with him and with other monks the 'revival' is also a starting point of decline. In the lived realities and practices of individuals, the reinscribed social and spatial boundaries have proved to be permeable and monks have failed to live up to the monastic ideal embodied by the heroic elders.

The Early Reform Years as a 'Moral Past'

It was not only during discussions with monks about monastic revival that rememberings of the early reform era emerged. Monks' understandings and representations of the present and future of monasticism were intermeshed with such rememberings. They frequently made comparative judgements that appeared to undermine monastic morality by denigrating the virtue of their own time, place, and/or generation. This drawing of

boundaries between themselves and moral others was not simply a nostalgia for a lost past or 'tradition' within the context of rapid 'modernisation'. It also had, to borrow from Battaglia (1995), a productive capacity, working as 'practical or active nostalgia' (78) oriented towards the future. Evaluative comparisons embedded in monks' narratives between a 'moral past' and the morally troubled 'present' affirm the legitimacy of monasticism as a project; but they also create an ethical space for change in practice, enabling, as well as constraining monastic actors in their pursuit of what they sense or feel to be good and desirable.

Affirming the Moral Past

> *Nowadays people do not have faith. In the old days, the old people had strong faith and stamina. With strong faith they could take refuge in the Three Jewels. Nowadays, we young people are not like that.*
>
> —Senior monastic administrator at a branch monastery in Reb kong.

> *There are only 20 monks who really focus on studying the five texts; they have become fewer as life has got better. The minds of monks have been polluted and they mainly think about earning and spending money.*
>
> —Senior scholar and teacher at Sku 'bum.

> *Nowadays, most lamas are concerned with their own interests and accumulation of their own wealth and there are few who spend money for the collective good of the monastery.*
>
> —Monk in his late twenties at Rong bo monastery.

A moral decline requires a moral 'other' in time and/or space. People I spoke to (monks and laity) often distinguished between the present and an idealised past. This was implicit in comments made during many conversations about contemporary monastic life and development, including the narratives cited at the beginning of this section: '*nowadays*, people do not have faith'; 'the minds of monks *have been* polluted'; '*nowadays*, most lamas are concerned with their own interests and accumulation of wealth'.

By drawing these boundaries between 'then' and 'now' or 'them' and 'us' ('in the old days, the old people had strong faith'), monks are affirming a moral past and, to borrow from de Certeau (1984: 16–17), creating a 'utopian space' in which a possibility for the ideal exists (see also Battaglia 1995: 78). This possibility, based on belief, is set against the realities of what is seen every day: for example, the increasing numbers of monks who are disrobing, displaying inappropriate wealth-seeking behaviours or being seen in inappropriate places such as video game parlours.

The possibility of the ideal is affirmed through idealised institutional models in other times and places, such as the early Indian monastic university of Nālandā and the Dge lugs pa monasteries in India. It is also affirmed through stories, which make the 'nature' of the present historically contingent (ibid.: 16). These stories may be drawn from the exemplary lives of great figures of the past, including those contained in the Buddhist sūtras and the biographies of lamas, but they are also drawn from popular tales of the lives of the heroic figures who remained hidden and continued to practise during the Maoist period and from memories of the first flush of monastic revival in the 1980s.

The 1980s in many respects represents a liminal space of possibility and imagination, suspended between the past and the present. It was a time other than that of the 'old society', the morality of which has been brought into question through not only socialist, but also modern Buddhist discourse (for example, Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las, 1997; Dge 'dun chos 'phel, trans. in Lopez, 2009; Sgo yon, 2009).[29] It was also a time other than 'the present' time of material development and moral degeneration. Characterised as the *yang dar* or 're-' (i.e. third) dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, it was a new beginning and is generally remembered in the narratives I collected as a time when life was hard but simple, and people's minds were pure, steadfast and faithful.

Memories, stories and imaginings of moral times and places affirm a belief in the 'ideal' and the morality and legitimacy of the monastic project in general and, more specifically, the recent Dge lugs pa revival. Yet, at the same time, the drawing of moral boundaries between an (increasingly distant) 'ideal' and the 'real' creates an ethical space for the transformation of established 'traditions'.

Creating Space for Change

One of the dynamics of monastic revival and development since the early 1980s has been a tension between different visions of monastic development *within* monasteries. The younger generation have new ideas, values and conceptions of what is good in relation to monastic systems and practices. However, the elders, the 'heroic' monks and reincarnate lamas

[29] Monks told me that the Dalai Lama has also given teachings on the negative aspects of some traditional monastic economic practices.

who represent continuity with the past and provided the authority for the monastic revival, have great authority. Phun tshogs, a former monk, remarked that it is not easy for the younger monks to implement changes. The elders are respected by the laity and have the final authority. If there is a difference of opinion, the elders are more powerful and 'will win the battle'.

Many of the monks I interviewed were those among the younger generation who are now in positions of responsibility in their monasteries. When they talked about actual or aspired for reforms, they usually presented them as (at least partially) ethically driven and necessitated (at least partially) by the perceived moral decline of an increasingly materialistic society. This decline was explicitly or implicitly tied to a distinction between the qualities of the elders and (at least most of) the 'younger' generation. Examples which I have explored more fully elsewhere (Caple, 2010; 2011) include methods of collective monastic financing and the development of self-supporting businesses, collective support for the livelihood of individual monks, changes to the education system and the system of monastic leadership through reincarnation lineage.

On the one hand, monks expressed a genuine 'sense of loss' in what are seen as morally troubled times. Their perspectives and practices have been conditioned by the 'sense of the times' and their experiences of its concrete manifestations. They are facing very real challenges in maintaining not only the authority and reputation of Dge lugs pa monasticism, but also the basis of its existence. While resources may be pouring into some monasteries for the construction of temples and the material life of monks is improving, monastic assemblies are shrinking (Caple, 2011). Fewer young men are entering monastic life and increasing numbers of monks are disrobing. This is perhaps the most potent symbol for monks of a moral decline that threatens the continuity of monasticism.

Yet, at the same time, an acknowledgement of the moral degeneration of 'the times' and the failings and weaknesses of the younger generation reinforces the virtue and heroism of the elders and thus the moral authority of the past upon which legitimacy of the monastic revival was based. Moreover, it allows room for ethically motivated reforms to institutionalised practices and 'traditions'. To take one example, the moral logics of economic reforms at Rong bo monastery advocated by the younger generation were intermeshed with their perceptions of a decline in the quality of monks and reincarnate lamas in an increasingly materialistic society and the appearance of religious fraud, 'fake monks' and the unethical

accumulation of personal wealth (Caple, 2010).[30] The ideal must be pursued within the contexts of the political, economic and social realities of the present time. The younger generation's negotiation of these moral boundaries between past and present and between the elders and the younger generation thus seems to be one of the ways in which they have created an ethical space for ways of being and doing that depart from past practices that, in at least some cases, the elders have sought to maintain.

Conclusion

The history of contemporary Dge lugs pa monasticism is usually framed around the major events and periods of the PRC nation-state. One of the problems of periodisation in history telling, marked out by major 'events' and points of rupture, is that this can lead to reductiveness and elide continuities between a particular period, its past and the present. Periodisation requires a narrative frame, usually structured around the actions of the dominant power (or the actions of the subordinate in relation to the dominant power). However, the narratives of monks reveal a layering of different temporal and spatial frameworks within which the Dge lugs pa revival is located and understood: the frame of individual life histories in which the revival was, for some, a shift from private to public practice that continued despite the violence and traumas of the Maoist period; the frame of community histories in which the revival represented a reinscription of social and spatial boundaries and re-formation of the monastic moral community (albeit it in radically altered social, political and economic contexts) at both general and local levels; and the frame of the history of Buddhism in Tibetan societies in which the revival is simply another stage in a history rooted in a 'narrative frame of a nation' (Anagnost 1997) other than that of the modern Chinese nation-state.

In short, the story that emerged from the telling of the Dge lugs pa revival by monks was not one of negotiation of public space by elites; neither was it tied to the narrative frame of political events and processes that more commonly structure accounts of religious revival in post-Mao China. Rather, it was a story of (sometimes gradual) social re-ordering

[30] The main changes in monastic financing at Rong bo and other monasteries in Reb kong and western Ba yan have been a shift away from institutionalised collection of contributions towards monastic activities from patron communities and the development of self-supporting businesses. See Caple, 2010.

and the resurgence or reformation of the monastic moral community, the shared values of which underpin the existence and continuity of Dge lugs pa monasticism. Through understanding these social processes and their significance as the foundations of monastic revival it is possible to move beyond the constraints of the state-society framework in understanding the dynamics of subsequent monastic development and the very real challenges facing Dge lugs pa monasticism today (see Caple 2010, 2011). Monks' narratives of this past time are not just nostalgic gazings on the past; they are active rememberings that play an important role, both constraining and enabling monks in their negotiation of the present and future.

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REB KONG GYI NYI MA NUB PA: SHAR SKAL LDAN RGYA MTSHO SKU PHRENG BDUN PA'I SKU TSHE: 1916–1978 [THE SUN DISAPPEARS IN REB KONG: THE LIFE OF THE SEVENTH SHAR SKAL LDAN RGYA MTSHO: 1916–1978]

Gedun Rabsal

Summary

This chapter focuses on the life of Blo bzang 'phrin las lung rtogs rgya mtsho, who at the age of three, was recognised as the seventh Shar Skal ldan rgya mtsho of Rong bo monastery. His life story parallels the history of modern Tibet. Recognised as the head of Rong bo monastery, one of the major Dge lugs pa monasteries in A mdo, he witnessed the fall of the Guomindang, the victory of the Communists China and the occupation of Tibet. Like many Tibetan leaders at that time, he became involved in local politics and assumed in 1953 the position of the first chairman of Rma lho Tibetan autonomous prefecture. Using contemporary sources, I show that although he was given the opportunity to flee to India and ultimately to a western country, he chose to stay with his own people. I also argue that his way of resistance was to use his religious education and standing. At the height of the Communists control, he intensified his religious teachings, but like many Tibetan leaders, he ultimately fell victim to the Communists and was imprisoned for the next twenty years. On 16 June 1978, Blo bzang 'phrin las lung rtogs rgya mtsho died in Ka mdo prison (presently located at Bayan county, Qinghai). This chapter uses both Chinese and Tibetan sources to shed light on the turbulent life of the seventh Shar Skal ldan rgya mtsho.

རིབ་གོང་གི་ཉི་མ་ནུབ་པ།

-ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བདུན་པའི་སྐུ་ཚེ།[1]



ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བདུན་པ། ༡༦༡༧_༡༦༧༨

-དགེ་འདུན་རབ་གསལ།

1 རྩོམ་ཡིག་འདི་ལ་ ལ་རྩེ་དཔེ་མཛོད་ཁང་ (www.latse.org) དང་། བོད་ཀྱི་ནང་བསྟན་དཔེ་ཚོགས་ལྟེ་གནས་(www.tbrc.org) གཉིས་ནས་རྒྱུ་ཆའི་ཡིག་ཆ་རྣམས་བེད་སྤྱོད་རོགས་རམ་གནང་བྱུང་བར་ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཆེ་ཞུ། དཔེ་མཛོད་ཁང་འདི་གཉིས་ལ་མ་བརྟེན་པར་རྩོམ་ཡིག་འདི་འབྲི་ཐུབ་བྲལ། ད་དུང་ལ་རྩེ་དཔེ་མཛོད་ཁང་གི་དབུ་འཛིན་སྐུ་ཞབས་མཁས་དབང་པད་མ་འབུམ་ལགས་དང་། དེ་བཞིན་པད་མ་རྣམ་རྒྱལ་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་རྒྱ་ཡིག་གི་གོ་དོན་ངོ་སྤྲོད་བྱས་པར་ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཆེ་ཞུ། རྩོམ་པ་པོས།

བསེ་ཚང་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྡན་ (1938–) གྱིས་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བདུན་པའི་རྟོགས་བརྗོད་དུ་ཚིགས་བཅད་འདི་འདྲ་ཞིག་བརྩམས་གནང་འདུག དེ་ཡང་།

ཀྱེ་རུད་དགེ་ལེགས་གཏེར་ཆེན་ཉིན་མོར་བྱེད།།
ཞི་དབྱིངས་རྒྱ་ལྷའི་ཕང་བར་ཡོངས་ནུབ་པས།།
གསེར་ལྗོངས་ཡངས་པའི་མཁའ་ལ་མུན་པའི་གླུང་།།
འཁྲིགས་པས་སྐྱེ་རྒུ་སྨྱོ་ངན་རྒྱ་མཚོར་སིམ།།[2]

ཞེས་ཉི་མ་ཞིག་ནུབ་པའི་རྐྱེན་དེ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་རེབ་གོང་གི་ནམ་མཁའ་རུ་མུན་པ་འཁྲིགས་པ་དང་། དེ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་མི་དམངས་རྣམས་སྡུག་བསྔལ་གྱི་རྒྱ་མཚོར་ཐིམ་ཡོད་ཅེས་བསྟན་འདུག སྐབས་འདིའི་ཉི་མ་ནི་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བདུན་པ་ལ་ཞུ་བ་ཡིན།

རེབ་གོང་གི་ཀྲན་ཀྲོན་ཆོས་མནའ་བསྐྱལ་སྐབས། ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་མཚན་ནས་འབོད། དེ་ཡང་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཞེས་པའི་ཡིག་སྐད་ཀྱི་སྒྲ་གདངས་ཤིག་མིན། དེ་ནི་ “ང་སྐལ་ལྡ་རྒྱ་ཚོའི་སྐུ་”ལྷ་བུའི་ཁ་སྐད་ཀྱི་སྒྲ་གདངས་ཤིག་ཡིན། འདི་ལྟར་མནའ་བསྐྱལ་བའི་སྒྲ་དེ་དག་ནི་ བྱིས་པ་ཡིན་སྐབས་སུ་ཡང་ཡང་ཐོས་པ་རེད་ལ། ད་དུང་ཡང་ངའི་རྣ་ལམ་ན་ལྷང་ངེར་གྲག མནའ་དེ་ནི་བདེན་རྫུན་གྱི་དབྱེ་ཤན་འབྱེད་པའི་ཁྲིམས་ཀྱི་རྒྱ་མ་ཞིག་མཚུངས། དེ་ལྟ་བུའི་རེབ་གོང་གི་མི་དམངས་དང་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་བར་གྱི་འབྲེལ་བ་ལ་ནི། བླ་མ་དང་སློབ་མའི་འབྲེལ་བ་ཡོད་ལ། དཔོན་པོ་དང་མི་སེར་གྱི་འབྲེལ་བ་འང་ཡོད།

རོང་པོ་དགོན་ཆེན་འདི་ ༡༣༤༢ ལོར་རོང་པོ་བླ་མ་བསམ་གཏན་རིན་ཆེན་གྱིས་ཕྱག་བཏབ་ཡོད་ཅིང་མདོ་སྨད་ཁུལ་གྱི་དགོན་པ་ཆེས་སྔ་གྲས་ཤིག་ཡིན། དགོན་པ་འདིར་གྲྭ་ཚང་གསུམ་ཡོད་ཅིང་། ༡༩༥༨ ལོར་དགེ་འདུན་པ་གྲངས་ ༡༥༠༠ ཙམ་ཡོད། རེབ་གོང་དུ་དགོན་པ་འདི་དང་བཅས་པའི་དགོན་མ་ལག་སུམ་ཅུ་སོ་ལྔ་ཞེས་གཞིས་དགོན་མང་པོ་ཡོད། དགོན་པ་འདི་དག་དང་བཅས་པའི་རེབ་གོང་ཡུལ་གྱི་སྐྱབས་མགོན་ནི་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཚང་ཡིན།

ཕྲན་ཨ་རིར་འགྱུར་སྐབས་སྐུའི་གཅེན་པོ་ལྷག་མཆོར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་དང་འབྲེལ་བ་བྱེད་པའི་གོ་སྐབས་འགའ་ཐོབ། གོ་སྐབས་དེ་དག་གི་རིང་ཁོང་གིས་ང་ཚོར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་སྐོར་བཀའ་སློབ་གནང་། བཀའ་སློབ་དེ་ནི་ ༡༩༥༠ ལོ་ཙམ་ལ་ཁོང་ཚོ་ལྷ་ས་ལ་ཕེབས་པའི་སྐབས་ཀྱི་བཀའ་སློབ་ཅིག་ཡིན། “ངས་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་ཚང་ལ་འདི་ལྟར་ཞུས་པ་ཡིན། ང་ཚོའི་ལུང་པ་རྒྱ་ལ་ཤོར་ཚར་པ་རེད། ད་ཕ་ཡུལ་ལ་ལོག་ན་རྒྱ་མིས་འཛིན་བཟུང་བྱེད་ཀྱི་རེད། དེ་ལས་ང་ཚོ་ལྷན་དུ་རྒྱ་གར་སོགས་ཕྱི་རྒྱལ་ལ་འགྲོ་ཞེས་ཞུས་པ་ཡིན། དེའི་ལན་དུ་ཤར་ཚང་གིས། རིན་པོ་ཆེ་རང་ཕེབས་རོགས་གནང་། རེབ་གོང་མི་དམངས་ཀྱིས

2 རེབ་གོང་སྐྱབས་མགོན་བདུན་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་རྟོགས་བརྗོད། བསེ་ཚང་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྡན་གྱི་གསུང་རྩོམ་པོད་བཞི་པ། མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་། ༢༠༠༡ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༤༨༠

ངའི་ངོ་ལ་སྨྲུག་ནས་བསྟོད་ཡོད་པ་རེད། ངས་རེབ་གོང་མི་དམངས་གློས་གཏོང་ཐུབ་ཀྱི་མི་འདུག ཅེས་གསུངས་སོང་།”[3] ཞེས་པ་འདི་རེད། དེ་ལྟར་རེབ་གོང་གི་མི་དམངས་གློས་གཏོང་མ་ཐུབ་པའི་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བདུན་པ་འདི་ཉིད་སླར་ཨ་མདོར་ཐེབས་ཤིང་།[4] རིམ་གྱིས་རྒྱའི་བཙོན་ཁང་ནས་དགོངས་པ་རྫོགས་ཡོད་པ་རེད་ལ། འདིར་ཁོང་གི་སྐུ་ཚེའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་རགས་ཙམ་ཞིག་ཞུ་རྒྱུ་ཡིན།

ཁོང་གི་མཚན་ལ་སྐལ་ལྡན་བློ་བཟང་འཕྲིན་ལས་ལུང་རྟོགས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཞུ། ཁོང་མདོ་སྨད་བྱང་རྒྱུད་ཚུ་བཟང་རྔ་ལོ་ཐང་[5] དུ་འདན་མ་ཚང་ཞེས་པའི་ཁྱིམ་དུ་ཡབ་ཚེ་རིང་དོན་གྲུབ་དང་ཡུམ་འདན་མ་བཟའ་རྟ་མགྲིན་སྐྱིད་གཉིས་ཀྱི་སྲས་སུ་འཁྲུངས། ཡབ་ཡུམ་འདི་གཉིས་ལ་སྲས་མིང་སྲིང་བཅུ་གཉིས་འཁྲུངས་ཡོད་པ་ལས་བླ་མ་འདི་ནི་བརྒྱད་པ་དེ་ཡིན། འཁྲུངས་པའི་ལོ་ནི་ ༡༩༡༧ སྟེ་བོད་མེ་འབྲུག་ལོའི་ཟླ་བཅུ་བའི་ཚེས་ཉེར་དགུ་ཡིན། སྐུ་ན་གཞོན་པའི་སྐབས་སུ་དཀའ་བཅུ་བ་དགེ་ལེགས་བླ་མ་ཞུ་བ་ཞིག་གིས་ཡོན་ཏན་ཚེ་འཕེལ་ཞེས་མཚན་གསོལ།

༡༩༡༨ ལོ་ཙམ་ལ། རེབ་གོང་དུ་ཁྲི་ཆེན་འཇམ་དབྱངས་ཐུབ་བསྟན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ (1866–1928) གཙོས་བླ་སྤྲུལ་དང་སྐྱ་སེར་གྱི་ཚོགས་འདུས་པའི་དབུས་སུ་ཤར་བླ་བྲང་ཆེན་མོ་རུ་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་སྤྲུལ་སྐུ་ངོས་འཛིན་ཆེད་དུ་ཟན་རིལ་བསྒྲིལ་བའི་ཐབས་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས།. རྗེ་འདི་སྐུ་གོང་མའི་ཡང་སྲིད་དུ་ངོས་འཛིན་བྱུས། དེ་དུས་རྗེ་འདི་པ་དགུང་ལོ་གསུམ་ཡིན། རེབ་གོང་གི་མི་སྣ་ཚུ་བཟང་དུ་བསྐྱོད་དེ་མཇལ་དར་ཕུལ། ལོ་དེའི་ལོ་མཇུག་ལ་ཡུལ་འབྲུག་གི་རྐྱེན་གྱིས་མཆོག་སྤྲུལ་དེ་ཟི་ལིང་དུ་གདན་དྲངས། དེ་ཡང་སླ་པུའུ་རྦང་ཞེས་པའི་ཡུལ་དཔོན་དེས་བཙན་འཕྲོག་ལྟར་འཁྲེར་བ་ཡིན་འདུག དགུང་ལོ་བཞིའི་སྟེང་ལན་གྲུ་ནས་རེབ་གོང་དུ་གདན་དྲངས་ནས་ཁྲི་སྟོན་མཛད། རྗེ་རྒྱའི་རབ་འབྱམས་པ་དགེ་འདུན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཞུ་བ་ཡོངས་འཛིན་དུ་བསྟེན།

༡༩༢༢ ལོར་དགུང་ལོ་བདུན་བཞེས་པའི་སྟེང་ཁྲི་ཆེན་འཇམ་དབྱངས་ཐུབ་བསྟན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ལས་རབ་བྱུང་གི་སྡོམ་པ་ཞུས་ཤིང་། མཚན་ལ་བློ་བཟང་འཕྲིན་ལས་ལུང་རྟོགས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཞེས་གསོལ། དགུང་ལོ་བཅུ་གཉིས་བཞེས་པ་ ༡༩༢༧ མེ་ཡོས་ལོར་སྐྱིས་སྟེང་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྡན་ (1881–1944) ཡོངས་འཛིན་དུ་བསྟེན་ནས་ཆོས་ཀྱི་སློབ་གཉེར་གནང་། སློབ་གཉེར་དེ་ནི་བོད་ཀྱི་སྲོལ་རྒྱུན་གྱི་སློབ་སྦྱོང་ཡིན་ལ། རིག་གནས་ཆེ་བ་ལྔ་དང་ཆུང་བ་ལྔས་བསྡུས་ཡོད།[6] དེ་ནས་ལོ་རེ་བཞིན་

3 ལུང་འདི་ནི་ལྟག་མཚེར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྐུ་དངོས་ཀྱིས་ཕྲན་ལ་གསུངས་བྱུང་མོད་དེ་ལྟར་སྨྲ་འཇུག་བྱེད་ཐུབ་མེད་ལ། དེ་ལས་གཞན་པའི་ཁུངས་སྐྱེལ་ཡིག་ཆ་ཡང་མ་རྙེད།

4 ད་ལྟ་ནིའུ་ཡོག་ཏུ་བཞུགས་བཞིན་པའི་ཨ་མདོ་ཤ་བོས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར་ན། རེབ་གོང་སྐྱབས་མགོན་དབུས་ལ་ཆིབས་བསྒྱུར་གནང་སྐབས་རེབ་གོང་གི་མི་དམངས་ཀྱིས་གསོལ་བ་བཏབ་ནས། “དབུས་ཀྱི་མཛད་པ་རྣམས་གྲུབ་རྗེས་རེབ་གོང་དུ་ཐེབས་རྒྱུ་ཡིན” ཞེས་དབུ་མནའ་བཞེས་བཅུག་པ་རེད།

5 མཚོ་སྔོན་ཞིང་ཆེན་ཧུའུ་ཀྲུའུ་རྫོང་ནང་མོན་ཞྭ་ཞང་གི་ཁོངས་སུ་གཏོགས་པའི་རྔ་ལོ་ཐང་།

6 ཕྱག་ན་པད་མོ་ཡབ་རྗེ་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་སྐྱེས་རབས་ཀྱི་རྒྱུད་གསང་གསུམ་སྣང་བའི་སྒྲོན་མེ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ། འཇིགས་མེད་དམ་ཆོས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། མཚོ་སྔོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་། ཤོག་གྲངས། ༣༦༧_༣༩༨ (གོང་གསལ་རྣམས་ནི་འཇིགས་མེད་དམ་ཆོས་རྒྱ་མཚོས་མཛད་པའི་སྐྱེས་རབས་ལས་བཏུས་ཤིང་འདིར་ཁོང་དགུང་ལོ་ ༡༦ ལ་ཐེབས་པའི་བར་ཙམ་དུ་གསལ།)

ཡོངས་འཛིན་སྨིས་སྟེང་ཚང་གི་ཞབས་པད་བསྟེན་ནས་ཆོས་ཀྱི་གསན་སྦྱོང་གནང་ཞིང་། དགུང་ལོ་བཅུ་དགུའི་སྟེང་ཡོངས་འཛིན་རིན་པོ་ཆེར་རྩོམ་རྒྱུགས་ཀྱང་ཕུལ་འདུག[7]

ཚེ་ཏན་ཞབས་དྲུང་འཇིགས་མེད་རིགས་པའི་བློ་གྲོས་ཚང་ (1910–1985) གིས། "དེ་ཡང་གོང་ས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་འདི་བ་དགུང་ལོ་ཕྲ་མོའི་དུས་འདི་ཙམ་ནས་འགྲེལ་བའི་ས་ཁྲུངས་ནོན་པ་སོགས་དམ་པའི་ཡོན་ཏན་རང་འབྱུངས་སུ་མངའ་བ་དང་། སྤྱིར་ཐུགས་རིག་གསལ་ཞིང་རྣམ་དཔྱོད་ཡོངས་སུ་རྫོགས་བ་དང་། བླ་མ་ལ་རྗེ་བཀུར་ཆེ་ཞིང་དད་བརྟན་པ་དང་། ལྷག་པར་བྱ་བའི་གནས་རྣམས་བཙ་སྦྱོང་སླ་ཞིང་མཁས་པའི་རྣམ་འགྱུར་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་སུ་ཐོན་པ་གང་ཅིས་ཡུད་ཙམ་བསྟེན་པའི་རིང་དེ་ནས་ཁ་ཞེ་མེད་པའི་ཐུགས་དད་འབྲུངས་པར་ཕྱིས་སུ་ཡང་ཡང་གསུང་ལ།"[8] ཞེས་འཇིགས་མེད་དམ་ཆོས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཚང་ཐོག་མར་སྤྲུལ་སྐུ་འདི་ལ་མཇལ་བའི་སྐབས་ཀྱི་ཐུགས་སྣང་དེ་ལྟར་བྱུང་ལུགས་བཀོད་འདུག

༡༩༣༥ ལོར་དགུང་ལོ་ཉི་ཤུ་བཞེས་པའི་ལོར་སྐུ་འབུམ་ནས་པཎ་ཆེན་རིན་པོ་ཆེར་མཇལ། ༡༩༣༦ ལོའི་ཧོར་ཟླ་ ༦ ཚེས་ ༡༣ ནས་ ༣༡ བར་པཎ་ཆེན་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་དགུ་པ་བློ་བཟང་ཐུབ་བསྟན་ཆོས་ཀྱི་ཉི་མ་རེབ་གོང་དུ་ཕེབས་ཏེ་བཀའ་ཆོས་གནང་།[9] འདིའི་སྐོར་གྱི་མཛད་པ་རྣམས་ཞིབ་གསལ་ཡོངས་འཛིན་སྨིས་སྟེང་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྡན་གྱིས་རྟོགས་བརྗོད་སྙན་ངག "གསེར་གྱི་མེ་ཏོག" ཅེས་པ་བརྩམས་ཡོད་པ་རེད། དགུང་ལོ་ཉེར་གཉིས་པའི་སྟེང་མགོན་ཤུལ་གྱིས་ཞུས་པ་ལྟར་དུས་འཁོར་དབང་ཆེན་ཐོག་མ་གནང་།

དེ་ལྟར་སྐུ་ན་གཞོན་པའི་བླ་མ་འདྲིས་གཙོ་བོར་ཡོངས་འཛིན་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྡན་ཚང་དང་། དེ་བཞིན་ཤ་རོལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་བློ་བཟང་ལུང་རྟོགས་བསྟན་པའི་རྒྱལ་མཚན། (1888–1958) འཇིགས་མེད་དམ་ཆོས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། (1898–1946) ཁྲི་ཆེན་འཇམ་དབྱངས་ཐུབ་བསྟན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་སོགས་ཀྱི་མདུན་ནས་བསླབ་པ་སློབ་གཉེར་ལ་ཐུགས་བརྩོན་མཛད་ཅིང་། གཞུང་བཀའ་པོད་ལྔས་གཙོ་བྱས་པའི་མདོ་སྔགས་རིག་གནས་དང་བཅས་པའི་ཤེས་བྱ་ལ་མཁས་པའི་སྙན་པ་འཕེལ་བཞིན་ཡོད། ཁོང་གིས་གསེར་ཕྲེང་གི་སྤྱི་དོན་ཤོག་ལྡེབ་བརྒྱ་མ་ལོངས་ཙམ་དང་། དེ་བཞིན་མན་ངག་རྣམ་གསུམ་སོགས་བཀའ་རྒྱ་མའི་སྐོར་སོགས་གསུང་རྩོམ་སྣམ་ཆེ་བ་གང་ཙམ་ཡོད་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱང་ཕྱིས་སུ་གོད་ཆག་སྐབས་མེར་སྲེག་ཐེབས།[10]

7 རོང་བོ་དགོན་ཆེན་གྱི་གདན་རབས་རྫོགས་ལྡན་གཏམ་གྱི་རང་སྒྲ། འཇིགས་མེད་ཐེག་མཆོག མཚོ་སྔོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་། ༡༩༨༨ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༣༠༢ ན། "*ཕུན་ཚོགས་བཞི་ལྡན་འབྲས་བུའི་ཁུར་གྱིས་དུད།། སྙན་པའི་གྲགས་པ་དཀར་པོའི་མེ་ཏོག་གིས།། རབ་ཏུ་མཛེས་པའི་དཔག་བསམ་ལྗོན་པ་ཆེ།། དཔལ་ལྡན་ཟླ་བའི་དབང་པོ་རྒྱལ་གྱུར་ཅིག།*"ཅེས་ཕུལ་འདུག

8 རྟོགས་བརྗོད་གདུང་སེལ་སྨན་གྱི་ལྗོན་པ། མ་ཧཱ་པཎྜི་ཏ་རྗེ་བཙུན་རྗེ་འཇིགས་མེད་རིགས་པའི་བློ་གྲོས་མཆོག་གི་གསུང་འབུམ། གླེགས་བམ་གཉིས་པ། མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་། ༢༠༠༧ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༡༧༨

9 པཎ་ཆེན་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་དགུ་པ་བློ་བཟང་ཐུབ་བསྟན་ཆོས་ཀྱི་ཉི་མ་གང་གི་དགུང་ཚིགས་དང་བསྟུན་པའི་མཛད་རྣམ་རགས་བསྒྲིགས། བོད་ཀྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་རིག་གནས་དཔྱད་གཞིའི་རྒྱུ་ཆ་བདམས་བསྒྲིགས། སྤྱིའི་འདོན་ཐེངས་ ༢༢ པ། མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་། ༢༠༠༠ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༣༥༠

10 རྗེ་དགེ་འདུན་བསྟན་འཛིན་གྱི་རྣམ་ཐར་དད་པའི་འཇུག་ངོགས། རོང་བོ་བློ་བཟང་སྙན་གྲགས། བོད་ཀྱི་དུས་བབ། ༢༠༠༥ ཤོག་གྲངས། ༧༡

༡༩༤༤ ལོར་རང་གིས་མི་ལོ་བཅུ་བདུན་རིང་དགེ་རྒན་དུ་བསྟེན་པའི་ཡོངས་འཛིན་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྡན་མཆོག་སྐུ་མྱ་ངན་ལས་འདས་ཤིང་། སྐབས་དེར་ཤར་ཚང་ནི་དགུང་ལོ་སུམ་ཅུ་ཙམ་ལ་ཕེབས་ཡོད། ༡༩༤༧ ལོར་འཇིགས་མེད་དམ་ཆོས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཡང་ཞི་བར་གཤེགས་པ་རེད། འོན་ཀྱང་སྐུ་ན་གཞོན་པའི་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ནི་ད་ཆ་སློབ་མ་ཙམ་ཞིག་མ་ཡིན་པར་ཆོས་ཀྱི་གཞུང་ལུགས་ལ་མངའ་བརྙེས་པའི་མཁས་པ་གཞོན་ནུ་ཞིག་ཏུ་གྱུར་ཡོད་ཅིང་། དེའི་རྟགས་མཚན་དུ་ཁོང་གིས་མདོ་སྨད་ཀྱི་ས་ཆ་མང་པོར་ཞབས་ཀྱིས་བཅགས་ཤིང་། དུས་འཁོར་དབང་ཆེན་དང་ལམ་རིམ་ཆེན་མོའི་འཆད་འཁྲིད་སོགས་མདོ་སྔགས་ཀྱི་འཆད་འཁྲིད་གནང་བཞིན་མཆིས།11

༡༩༤༩ ལོར་རྒྱ་ནག་ཏུ་དམར་པོའི་གཞུང་བཙུགས་ཤིང་། དེའི་ཤུགས་རྐྱེན་དེ་སྤྱི་ཕྱི་འདིར་རེབ་གོང་དུ་སླེབས་བཞིན་ཡོད། སྐབས་གཅིག་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་པ་འདི་པ་རོང་བོ་དགོན་པའི་རྒྱབ་རིའི་རྩེར་གྱུར་ཕེབས་ནས་བཞུགས་པའི་སྐབས་སུ་ཞབས་ཞུ་བ་ཞིག་གིས་རྗེ་འདི་བ་ལ། "གྱུང་ཁྲིན་ཟེར་བའི་རྒྱལ་བློན་རྣམས་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པ་ལ་ཨེ་བཟང་"ཞེས་ཞུས་སྐབས། "ཤིན་ཏུ་མི་བཟང་"གསུངས་ནས་ཞལ་ནག་གེར་བཞུགས།12

མདོ་སྨད་ཁུལ་གྱི་བླ་ཆེན་མི་ཆེན་དེ་ཚོས་ཀྱང་སྐབས་འདི་འདྲ་ཞིག་ལ་རྒྱ་གྲོལ་གྱི་ལས་འགྱུལ་སྤྱིལ་དགོས་པའི་དགོངས་པ་འཁོར་ཡོད་པ་རེད། དེ་ཡང་ ༡༩༤༨ ལོར་མདོ་སྤྱི་ཧྥ་ཀླུ་པས་སྟག་མཚེར་རིན་པོ་ཆེར་ཕྱག་བྲིས་ཤིག་གནང་སྟེ། "ད་ལྟ་རྒྱ་ནག་དམར་ཕྱོགས་ཤུགས་ཆེར་ཕྱིན་པས་རྒྱ་ནག་གཞུང་ཤོར་འགྲོ་བ་འདྲ། དེ་ཤོར་ཚེ་ཟི་ལིང་ས་ཁུལ་དེ་བོད་ཀྱིས་ས་ཁུལ་གནད་ཆེ་བ་ཞིག་ཡིན་པས་དགྲ་དམག་བཀག་ནས་རང་ས་རང་གིས་འཛིན་པའི་ཐབས་བྱུས་གནང་དགོས།" ཞེས་གསུངས་འདུག་པ་ལྟར་སྟག་མཚེར་རིན་པོ་ཆེས་མདོ་སྨད་ཁུལ་གྱི་བླ་ཆེན་དཔོན་ཆེན་རྣམས་ལ་ཅི་བྱེད་ཅི་དགེའི་སྐོར་གསང་བའི་གྲོས་བསྡུར་བྱས་ཡོད་འདུག་ལ། སྟག་མཚེར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ཐུབ་བསྟན་འཇིགས་མེད་ནོར་བུ (1922–2008) མཆོག་གི་རྣམ་ཐར་དུ། "དེ་ནས་རིམ་གྱིས་མཚོ་སྔོན་འབྲུམ་རྭ་དཔོན་པོ་དང་། རེབ་གོང་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ། བླ་བྲང་གླིང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སོགས་གནད་འགག་ཆེ་བ་གང་ཡོད་ལ་འབྲེལ་བ་བྱེད་རྒྱུའི་འགོ་ཚུགས་པ་རེད། དེའི་དམིགས་ཡུལ་ནི་གོང་དུ་བཤད་པ་ལྟར། བོད་ཡུལ་བོད་པས་འཛིན་ཐུབ་པ་ཞིག་བྱེད་དགོས་རྒྱུ་དེ་རེད།"13 ཅེས་གསུངས་འདུག

༡༩༥༠ ལྕགས་སྟག་ལོར་དབུས་གཙང་དུ་ཕེབས། དེ་ཡང་སྐུའི་གཅེན་པོ་སྟག་མཚེར་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་རྣམ་ཐར་དུ་གསལ་བ་ལྟར་ན། ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་དང་གསེར་ཁོག་ཞྭ་ལུ་པ་ཚང་གཉིས་ནི་སྟག་མཚེར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་དང་ལྷན་དུ་ལྷ་ས་བཅིངས་འགྲོལ་ཀྱི་གྲོས་མོལ་ཆེད་མངགས་པའི་གྲས་ཡིན་པ་དང་། ཁོང་ཚོ་མཚོ་སྔོན་རིག་སློབ་གཞུང་དུ་འཛོམས་ཏེ་རིམ་གྱིས་དབུས་

11 ཆོས་ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་མཛད་པ་འདི་དག་ནི་ཁོང་དང་འབྲེལ་བ་ཡོད་པའི་བླ་མ་ཁག་གི་རྣམ་ཐར་དག་ན་ཞིབ་ཙམ་འདུག་ཀྱང་འདིར་རྒྱས་པར་མ་བྲིས།

12 རེབ་གོང་ཆོས་འབྱུང་ས་ཡི་ལྷ་མོ། ཨ་ཁུ་རི་ཁྲིད་པ་བློ་བཟང་མཁྱེན་རབ། ༢༠༠༥ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༢༥༧

13 ༧གོང་ས་རྒྱལ་མཆོག་བཅུ་བཞི་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་སྐུའི་གཅེན་པོ་སྐུ་འབུམ་ཁྲི་ཟུར་སྟག་མཚེར་མཆོག་སྤྲུལ་ཐུབ་བསྟན་འཇིགས་མེད་ནོར་བུའི་ཐུན་མོང་མཛད་རིམ་བསྡུས་དོན་དཔྱོད་ལྡན་ཡོངས་ལ་གདམས་དུ་བྱ་བ་སྟོན་མེད་ལེགས་བཤད་ངེས་དོན་སྤྲིན་གྱི་ཕོ་ཉ། མདོ་སྨད་པ་ཡོན་ཏན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཞེས་འབོད་པས་སྒྲུར། ༡༩༨༩ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༩༩-༡༠༠

ཕྱོགས་སུ་ཕེབས་ཡོད་པ་རེད།[14] འདིའི་སྐོར་ལ། “༡༩༨༩ ལོར་ཧྲ་མའི་གཞུང་ལ་གྲོས་མོལ་བྱེད་ཆེད་ཀུང་དབྱང་གིས་སྐུ་ཚབ་འཐུས་མི་འདམས་པའི་ཁྲོད་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཚང་ཡོད་པ་རེད། དེ་ནི་ཁོང་གི་སྐུ་གོང་མ་རྣམས་ལྷ་ས་ན་གོ་གནས་དང་མིང་ཆེན་པོ་ཡོད་པའི་སྟབས་ཀྱིས་ཡིན་པ་དང་། དམག་དཔོན་ཕེན་ཏེ་ཧྲེས་དངོས་སུ་འདམས་པ་རེད།” ཞེས་རྒྱ་ཡིག་གི[15] ཡིག་ཆ་ཞིག་ཏུ་འཁོད་འདུག་ལ། ད་དུང་ཤར་ཚང་ཟི་ལིང་ནས་༡༩༥༠ ལོའི་ཟླ་བ་ ༢ པའི་ནང་ལྷ་ས་ལ་ཆས་པ་དང་། ཟི་ལིང་དུ་དམག་དཔོན་ཕེན་ཏེ་ཧྲེ་ཐུག་ནས་བཀོད་མངགས་བྱུས་ཤིང་། ༡༩༥༠ ལོའི་ཟླ་ ༥ པའི་ནང་དབུས་ལམ་དུ་ཕེབས་ཡོད་པ་རེད་ཅེས་ཀྱང་གསལ་འདུག

༸གོང་ས་མཆོག་གི་མཛད་རྣམ་རྒྱ་ཆེན་སྙིང་རྗེའི་རོལ་མཚོར་ཡང་   ཕན་མིང་ཅན་གྱི་ཇོམ་ཡིག་ཅིག་ལུང་དྲངས་པའི་ནང་འདི་ལྟར། “༡༩༥༠ ལོའི་ཟླ་བ་ལྔ་པར་མཚོ་སྔོན་ཞིང་ཆེན་ཨུ་ཡོན་ལྷན་ཁང་དང་མཚོ་སྔོན་དམག་ཁུལ་ཁང་གིས་ཀྲུང་དབྱང་དང་། ནུབ་བྱང་ཅུས་ནུབ་བྱང་དམག་ཁུལ་ཁང་བཅས་ཀྱི་མཛུབ་སྟོན་ལ་གཞིགས་ནས་ཏཱ་ལའི་བླ་མའི་གཅེན་པོ་སྟག་མཚེར་སྤྲུལ་སྐུས་དབུ་བཞུགས་སྐུ་ཚབ་དང་། ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་དང་། ཞྭ་ལུ་རྩེ་ཐོག་ཐུ་རྣམ་གཉིས་སྐུ་ཚབ། དགེ་ལེགས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་དྲུང་ཡིག་ཆེན་མོ་བ་བཅས་ཡིན་པའི་མཚོ་སྔོན་ཞིང་ཆེན་གྱི་དགོན་སྡེ་ཁག་གི་བོད་ཞི་བའི་བཅིངས་འགྲོལ་གཏོང་རྒྱུར་གོ་བསྐོན་བསླབ་བྱ་བྱེད་མཁན་སྐུ་ཚབ་ཚོགས་པ་བོད་དུ་ཁ་ཏ་བྱེད་པར་མངགས་པ་རེད། མཚོ་སྔོན་གྱི་གོ་བསྐོན་བསླབ་བྱའི་ཚོགས་པ་རྟོག་ཐོན་བྱེད་ཁར་སྤྱི་ཁྲབ་བཀོད་འདོམས་པ་ཕེ་ལགས་སྐུ་ངོ་མ་ཟི་ལིང་དུ་ཕེབས་ནས་ཁོང་ཚོ་དང་མཇལ་འཕྲད་གནང་ཐོག་བོད་ཞི་བའི་བཅིངས་འགྲོལ་གཏང་རྒྱུའི་སྐོར་འབྲེལ་ཡོད་སྲིད་བྱུས་ཀྱི་དགོངས་དོན་བརྒྱུད་བསྒྲགས་གནང་ནས་ཁོང་ཚོར་བོད་ཞི་བའི་བཅིངས་འགྲོལ་གཏོང་རྒྱུའི་བརྩོན་ལེན་བྱེད་ཆེད་ལེགས་སྐྱེས་འབུལ་དགོས་པའི་སྐུལ་ལྕག་ཀྱང་གནང་བ་རེད།”[16] ཅེས་འཁོད་འདུག

ཐེངས་འདིའི་སྐུ་ཚབ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་གྲས་སུ “རྒྱ་མིའི་དཔོན་པོ་ལིའུ་ཐེར་བ་ཞིག་དང་རྒྱ་མོ་ཞིག སྔོན་ཟི་ལིང་ཊྲ་ཕུ་ཕང་གི་སྐབས་ཟི་ལིང་གི་ལས་བྱེད་པ་སློག་འཕྲིན་གཏོང་མཁན་ཞིག་བཅས་ཡོད”[17] ཡོད་པ་དང་། དེ་ནས་དབུས་ལམ་དུ་ཕེབས་ཏེ་ཞགས་

14 རེབ་གོང་བཅིངས་གྲོལ་བྱུས་པའི་སྔ་གཞུག བཀྲ་ཤིས་རྣམ་རྒྱལ། རྡོ་རྗེ། ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༤༤ རྨ་ལྷོའི་རིག་གནས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ཀྱི་དཔྱད་ཡིག དེབ་དང་པོ། ༡༩༩༢ “༡༩༥༠ ལོའི་ཟླ་ ༨ པར་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་དང་དགེ་ལེགས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་བཅས་ཀྱིས་རྩ་འཛུགས་ཀྱི་མངག་བཅོལ་དང་ལེན་དང་ཕྲག་ཏུ་ལས་འགན་ལྷི་མོ་ཁུར་ཏེ་གཞན་པའི་བོད་རིགས་འཐུས་རྣམས་དང་མཉམ་དུ་ཐོན་ལ་ལྷ་སར་སྐྱོད་ཅིང་། བོད་ལྗོངས་ཞི་བས་བཅིངས་གྲོལ་གཏོང་བའི་དོན་དུ་དཀའ་ལས་བརྒྱབ་ཅིང་ནུས་ཤུགས་བཏོན།” ཞེས་གསལ།

15 爱国民主人士夏日仓生平，赵清阳，多杰 《རྒྱལ་གཅེས་དམངས་གཙོའི་མི་སྣ་ཤར་ཚང་གི་སྐུ་ཚེའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས། ཀྲའོ་ཆིན་དབྱང་ དང་རྡོ་རྗེ།》 རྨ་ལྷོའི་རིག་གནས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་རྒྱུ་ཆ། ཐེངས་གཉིས་པ་ ༡༩༩༨ 《ནང་ཁུལ་ཡིག་ཆ། རྒྱ་ཡིག》 ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༩༠-༡༠༣

16 མཛད་རྣམ་རྒྱ་ཆེན་སྙིང་རྗེའི་རོལ་མཚོ། ནོར་གླིང་བོད་ཀྱི་རིག་གཞུང་གཅེས་སྐྱོང་ཁང་ནས་དཔར་སྐྲུན་བྱས། ༢༠༠༩ གླེགས་བམ་གསུམ་པ། ཤོག་གྲངས ༣༡༡

17 ༸གོང་ས་རྒྱལ་མཆོག་བཅུ་བཞི་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་སྐུའི་གཅེན་པོ་སྐུ་འབུམ་ཁྲི་ཟུར་སྟག་མཚེར་མཆོག་སྤྲུལ་ཐུབ་བསྟན་འཇིགས་མེད་ནོར་བུའི་ཐུན་མོང་མཛད་རིམ་བསྡུས་དོན་དཔྱོད་ལྡན་ཡོངས་ལ་གཏམ་དུ་བྱ་བ་སྔོན་མེད་ལེགས་བཤད་ངེས་དོན་སྙིན་གྱི་ཕོ་ཉ།   མདོ་སྨད་པ་ཡོན་ཏན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཞེས་འབོད་པས་སྦྲར། ༡༩༧༩ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༡༡༨

ཆུ་ཁར་ཐེབས་སྐབས་ཁོང་ཚོས་ཆབ་མདོ་ཤོར་ཟིན་པའི་གནམ་ཐོས་ཡོད་པ་དང་། ཉིན་ཤས་རྗེས་སུ་ "བྱང་སྤྱིའི་ཁོངས་ནས་ས་ཞིབ་པ་ཧོར་པ་རྟ་པ་བཞི་བཅུ་ཙམ་སླེབས་ནས་ཞིབ་བཤེར་བྱས" རྗེས། བྱང་སྤྱི་ནས་བཀའ་མ་ཐེབས་བར་དུ་ཁྱེད་ཚོ་ཡོང་ཚོག་གི་མ་རེད་ཅེས་བཤད་དེ་དབུས་སུ་བསྐྱོད་རྒྱུ་བཀག་ཅིང་། རིམ་གྱིས་སྐབས་དེར་ཡོད་པའི་བྱང་སྤྱི་མཁན་ཆུང་ཐུབ་བསྟན་བཟང་པོ་ལགས་ཐེབས་ཏེ་འདྲི་བརྩད་རྗེས་ "བྱང་སྤྱི་ནས་རྒྱ་དཔོན་ལིའུ་ལ་ཁྱེད་རྣམས་བོད་པ་མིན་པར་བརྟེན་བོད་གཞུང་གི་བཀའ་འཁྲོལ་ཡི་གེ་མེད་པར་འགྲོ་ཚོག་གི་མ་རེད། བོད་པ་ཚོ་ཁོང་ཚོའི་འདོད་པ་རེད"[18] ཅེས་གསུངས་ཡོད་འདུག་ལ། དེ་ནས་འགྲོ་རོགས་རྒྱ་མི་རྣམས་དེར་བཀག་རྗེས་བོད་པ་རྣམས་རིམ་གྱིས་ནགས་ཆུ་ཁར་ཐེབས་ཡོད་འདུག

སྐུ་ཚབ་འཕྱུས་མིའི་ཚོགས་གཙོ་ལྷག་མཆོར་རིན་པོ་ཆེས་སྐབས་འདིར་མཐོང་ཐོས་དངོས་སུ་བརྗོད་པའི་གསང་བའི་སྙན་ཞུ་ཞིག་བོད་གཞུང་ལ་ཕུལ་ཡོད་འདུག་ཅིང་། ནགས་ཆུ་ཁར་ཡང་ལྷ་ས་ནས་གཞུང་གི་བཀའ་འཁྲོལ་ཐོབ་རྒྱུ་ལ་བདུན་ཕྲག་གཉིས་ལྷག་ཅིག་གི་ཡུན་ལ་སྒུག་ཡོད་པ་དང་། དེ་ནས་སྐུ་ཚབ་ནས་སྐོར་ཁག་རེ་རེ་བགོས་ཏེ་སོ་སོར་ཐོན་ཡོད་འདུག་ལ། ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཚང་ནི་ ༡༩༥༠ ལོའི་ཟླ་ ༡༡ ཚེས་ ༡ ཉིན་ལྷ་སར་ཐེབས་པ་རེད། ཟླ་དེའི་ཚེས་ ༩ ཉིན་རྩེ་ཕོ་བྲང་དུ་ ༧རྒྱལ་བ་རིན་པོ་ཆེར་མཇལ་བ་རེད།

དུས་སྐབས་འདི་ལ་དགའ་ལྡན་བྱང་རྩེ་གྲྭ་ཚང་དུ་སློབ་གཉེར་གནང་བཞིན་པའི་ལྷ་སྡེ་ཨ་ཁུ་དགེ་བའི་བཤེས་གཉེན་ཆེན་པོ་དགེ་འདུན་བསྟན་འཛིན་གྱི་རྣམ་ཐར་དུ་བཀོད་པ་ལྟར་ན། བླ་མ་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བདུན་པ་མཆོག་ལྷ་སར་ཐེབས་མ་ཐག་ནས་དགའ་ལྡན་ཀླུ་འབུམ་ཁང་ཚན་གྱིས་མི་སྣ་ཆེད་གཏོང་གིས་ཐེབས་བསུ་ཞུས་ཡོད་པ་དང་། བོད་ཟླ་བཅུ་གཅིག་པའི་ཚེས་ཉི་ཤུ་ཙམ་ལ་དགའ་ལྡན་དུ་ཐེབས་སྐབས་དགའ་ལྡན་བླ་སྤྱི་དང་གྲྭ་ཚང་སོ་སོ་ནས་ཐེབས་བསུ་རྒྱ་ཆེན་ཞུས་ཡོད་འདུག ཟླ་དེའི་ཚེས་ ༢༢ ཙམ་ལ་དགོན་པར་ཆོས་ཞུགས་མཛད་ཅིང་དེར་ཀླུ་འབུམ་ཁང་ཚན་དུ་ཟླ་གཅིག་ཙམ་བཞུགས་རིང་གསུང་ཆོས་ཀྱང་གནང་འདུག སྐབས་འདིར་མདོ་སྨད་པ་དགེ་འདུན་ཆོས་འཕེལ་ཀྱང་དགའ་ལྡན་དུ་ཐེབས་ནས་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ལ་མཇལ་ཁ་ཞུས་ཡོད་འདུག[19] དེ་ནས་ལོ་དེའི་ལྷ་ལྡན་སྨོན་ལམ་ཆེན་མོར་ཞུགས་ཤིང་། གདན་ས་ཁག་དང་བཀྲ་ཤིས་ལྷུན་པོ་སོགས་ལ་གནས་མཇལ་ལ་ཡང་ཐེབས་ཡོད་པ་རེད།

ཐེངས་འདིར་སྐུ་ཚབ་ཏུ་ཐེབས་པའི་སྐུའི་གཅེན་པོ་ལྷག་མཆོར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ནི་རང་གི་ཡུམ་དང་བཅས་པའི་ནང་མིར་གྲོས་མོལ་བྱས་ཐོག་བསྟན་པ་ཆབ་སྲིད་ཀྱི་ཆེད་དུ་རྒྱ་གར་ཕྱོགས་སུ་འགྲོ་རྒྱུའི་ཐག་གཅོད་བྱས་ཏེ་བོད་རྒྱའི་ས་མཚམས་མཆིམས་ཕུ་ཟེར་བར་ཐེབས་ཟིན་པ་དང་།[20] དེ་ནས་རང་གི་ཞབས་ཞུ་བ་རྒྱལ་མཚན་ལགས་ལྷ་སར་མངགས་ཏེ། ལྷ་སར་བཞུགས་

18 གོང་མཚུངས། ཤོག་ངོས་ ༡༡༨

19 ཕྲན་གྱི་དགེ་རྒན་དམ་པ་ལྷ་སྡེ་ཨ་ཁུ་ཚང་དགེ་འདུན་བསྟན་མཆོག་གིས། "དགེ་འདུན་ཆོས་འཕེལ་ཚང་ཡང་དེ་དུས་མཇལ་བར་ཐེབས་སོང་། ཡིན་ན་ཡང་ཁོང་གིས་ཕྱག་འཚལ་མ་སོང་། གོན་པ་གཡང་ལུག་ཅིག་དང་ཞྭ་མོ་ལེབ་ལེབ་ཅིག་གོན་འདུག" ཅེས་ཕྲན་ལ་གསུངས་པ་དྲན།

20 ལ་རྩེ་དཔེ་མཛོད་ཁང་གི་ངག་རྒྱུན་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ཁོངས་སུ་ཡོད་པའི་སྐུའི་གཅེན་པོ་ལྷག་མཆོར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ལ་བཅར་འདྲི་ལྟར་ན། ལྷག་མཆོར་རིན་པོ་ཆེས་ནགས་ཆུ་ནས་བོད་གཞུང་ལ་གསང་བའི་སྙན་ཞུ་ཞིག་ཕུལ་བ་དེ་ གཞུང་ནས་མི་དམངས་ཚོགས་ཆེན་དུ་བཀྲམས་ཏེ་གསང་བ་ཕྱིར་གྲུར་བྱས་པ་དེ་ནི་ཁོང་བཙན་བྱོལ་དུ་ཐེབས་དགོས་པའི་རྒྱུ་མཚན་གལ་ཆེན་ཞིག་ཡིན་འདུག

བཞིན་པའི་ཁོང་གི་ཕེབས་རོགས་སྐུ་ཚབ་གཞན་གཉིས་ལ་ཡིག་འབྲེལ་གྱིས་གནས་སྐབས་གཟུགས་ཕུང་སྣུན་བཙོས་སྣད་སྤྱོད་རྒྱུ་ཡིན་པའི་ལན་བསྐྱལ་ཡོད་འདུག་ཅིང་། དེའི་ལན་དུ་ཤར་ཚང་གིས་སྐུའི་གཅེན་པོའི་སྐུ་གཟུགས་མགྱོགས་པོར་གསལ་དྭངས་ཡོང་བ་དང་སླར་གང་མྱུར་ཕེབས་ཐུབ་པའི་སྨོན་འདུན་ཞུས་ཡོད་འདུག[21]

དེ་ནས་ ༡༩༥༡ ལྕགས་ཡོས་ལོའི་བོད་ཟླ་དྲུག་པ་ཙམ་ལ་དབུས་ནས་ཆིབས་ཐོན་གྱིས་ལོ་དེའི་བོད་ཟླ་ "བཅུ་གཅིག་པའི་ཚེས་ཉི་ཤུ་བདུན་ལ་རྨ་ལྷོ་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་ཆོས་སྡེ་ཆེན་པོ་རོང་པོ་བདེ་ཆེན་ཆོས་འཁོར་གླིང་གི་གདན་ས་གསུམ་དང་རེབ་གོང་ལ་རོང་འབྲོག་གི་སེར་སྐྱ་མང་པོས་ཧ་རྒྱུགས་ཀྱི་བསུ་རོལ་རྒྱ་ཆེར་བྱེད་པའི་གྲ་སྒྲིག་བྱས་པར། རེབ་གོང་ས་གནས་ཀྱི་གྲུང་ཁྲིན་ཧྲང་གི་མི་སྣས་བཀག་འགོག་བྱས་ཤིང་། སྐྱབས་མགོན་རྡོ་རྗེ་འཆང་ཡང་ཆིབས་གོང་ནས་བབས།"[22] ཞེས་པ་ལྟར་རེབ་གོང་དུ་སླར་ཕེབས[23] པ་དང་། ཆིབས་བསྒྱུར་གྲུབ་པའི་རྗེས་སུ་རེབ་གོང་དགོན་སྡེ་ཁག་ལའང་ཆོས་དང་ཟང་ཟིང་གི་སྦྱིན་པ་གནང་འདུག[24]

༡༩༥༢ ཆུ་འབྲུག་ལོར་པེ་ཅིང་ལ་ཕེབས། སྐབས་དེར་ཀྲུང་གོའི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་བཙུགས་ནས་ལོ་བཞི་བ་ཡིན་ལ།[25] ལོ་དེའི་སྤྱི་ཟླ་ ༥ ཚེས་ ༡ གོང་ཙམ་ལ་པེ་ཅིན་ནས་མའོ་ཙེ་ཏུང་དང་ཀྲུའུ་ཨེན་ལེ། ཀྲུའུ་ཏེ་སོགས་ཀྱི་དཔོན་རིགས་ལ་མཇལ་འཕྲད་བྱས་ཡོད་འདུག དེ་ནས་རྒྱ་ནག་གི་ས་ཁུལ་གཞན་འགའ་ལ་གཟིགས་ཞིབ་ཆེད་ཕེབས་ཡོད་ཚོད་ཀྱང་ས་བོན་ཞིབ་ཆ་མ་རྙེད།

ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་པ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་འདི་པ་ཆབ་སྲིད་ཀྱི་ཡོ་འཁྲུགས་ཆེ་བའི་སྐབས་དེ་དག་ཏུ་རེབ་གོང་གཙོས་པའི་མདོ་སྨད་ས་ཁུལ་ཁག་ཏུ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་མཛད་པ་ཆེ་བ་དཔེར་ན། ༡༩༥༧ མེ་བྱ་ལོ་གཅིག་པུ་ལ་ཡང་། རྒྱལ་པོ་ཀླུ་ཆུ་དང་མདོ་བ། སོ་ནག བོན་བརྒྱ། ཨ་བར་ཐེ་བོ་བཅས་ཀྱིས་གནས་ཁག་ལྔ་རུ་དུས་འཁོར་དབང་ཆེན་ཐེངས་ལྔ་གནང་ཡོད་འདུག[26] དེ་ཙམ་དུ་མ་ཟད། ཆབ་སྲིད་ཀྱི་ལས་ཀའི་ནང་ཞུགས་དགོས་བྱུང་ཡོད་པ་དང་། "༡༩༥༣ ལོའི་ཟླ་ ༡༢ ཚེས་ ༢༢ ཉིན་ལ་ཀྲོན་ཆིས་རིམ་པའི་སྲིད་དབང་དང་འདྲ་བའི་རྨ་ལྷོ་བོད་རིགས་རང་སྐྱོང་ཁུལ་བཙུགས། ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་དང་། ཧོའུ་ཧྭ་ཨན། གསེར་ཁྲི། དགེ་

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21 Thupten Jigme Norbu, 1986: 231.

22 རྗེ་དགེ་འདུན་བསྟན་འཛིན་གྱི་རྣམ་ཐར་དད་པའི་འཇུག་ངོགས། རོང་བོ་བློ་བཟང་སྙན་གྲགས། བོད་ཀྱི་དུས་བབ། ༢༠༠༥ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༩༦

23 རྒྱལ་གཅེས་དམངས་གཙོའི་མི་སྣ་ཤར་ཚང་གི་སྐུ་ཚེའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས། རྨ་ལྷོའི་རིག་གནས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་རྒྱུ་ཆ། ཐེངས་གཉིས་པ་ ༡༩༨༩ ༼ནང་ཁུལ་ཡིག་ཆ། རྒྱ་ཡིག༽ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༩༠_༡༠༣ "༡༩༥༢ ལོའི་དགུན་ཁར་རོང་བོ་དགོན་ཆེན་དུ་སླར་ལོག་ཕེབས་པ་རེད།" ཅེས་བཀོད་འདུག

24 སྐབས་དེར་དགེ་འདུན་པ་རེ་རེར་སྨམ་བུས་བཟོས་པའི་ཟླ་གམ་རེ་གནང་བ་རེད་ཅེས་ཨ་མདོ་ཤ་བོ་ལགས་ཀྱིས་གསུངས་བྱུང་།

25 爱国民主人士夏日仓生平，赵清阳，多杰 ༼རྒྱལ་གཅེས་དམངས་གཙོའི་མི་སྣ་ཤར་ཚང་གི་སྐུ་ཚེའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས། ཀྲའོ་ཆིན་དབྱང་ དང་རྡོ་རྗེ།༽ རྨ་ལྷོའི་རིག་གནས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་རྒྱུ་ཆ། ཐེངས་གཉིས་པ་ ༡༩༨༩ ༼ནང་ཁུལ་ཡིག་ཆ། རྒྱ་ཡིག༽ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༩༠_༡༠༣ "༡༩༥༢ ལོའི་དཔྱིད་ཀར་མའོ་ཙེ་ཏུང་གིས་པེ་ཅིན་དུ་གདན་འདྲེན་ཞུས་པ་རེད། ཟླ་བ་ ༥ ཚེས་ ༡ གི་སྔོན་ཙམ་ལ་པེ་ཅིན་ནས་མའོ་ཙེ་ཏུང་དང་ ཀྲུའུ་ཨེན་ལེ། ཀྲུའུ་ཏེ་སོགས་ལ་མཇལ་འཕྲད་བྱས་པ་རེད། ཟླ་ ༥ ཚེས་ ༡ ཉིན་ཀྲུའུ་ཏེ་ཡིས་ཁོང་ལ་གསོལ་སྟོན་བཤམས་པ་རེད། གསོལ་སྟོན་ཐོག་ཁོང་གི་སྐུ་ཚ་རྡོ་རྗེ་ཀྲུང་དབྱང་མི་རིགས་སློབ་གྲྭ་ཆེན་མོར་བཞག་པ་རེད། ཤར་ཚང་གིས་ཕེན་ཏེ་ཏེ་དང་ཡིག་འགྲུལ་ཐེངས་མ་མང་པོ་བྱས་པ་རེད།" ཞེས་སོགས་གསལ་འདུག

26 རོང་བོ་དགོན་ཆེན་གྱི་གདན་རབས་རྫོགས་ལྡན་གཏམ་གྱི་རང་སྒྲ། འཇིགས་མེད་ཐེག་མཆོག མཚོ་སྔོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་། ༡༩༨༨ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༣༣༩

ལེགས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། བཀྲ་ཤིས། དབང་ཆེན། བ་རྒྱལ་བཅས་སོ་སོར་ཀུའུ་ཞི་གཙོ་བོ་དང་གཞོན་པར་བདམ་ཐོན་བྱུང་”27 བ་ལྟར། ཐེངས་དང་པོའི་ཀྲིག་ཀྲང་ངམ་ཁྲུལ་གཙོའི་འགན་བཞེས་པ་མ་ཟད། མི་དམངས་ཆབ་སྲིད་གྲོས་མོལ་ཚོགས་འདུའི་རྒྱལ་ཡོངས་ཨུ་ཡོན་ལྷན་ཁང་གི་ཨུ་ཡོན་དང་། རྒྱལ་ཡོངས་མི་རིགས་དོན་གཅོད་ལྷན་ཁང་གི་ཨུ་ཡོན་སོགས་ཀྱི་གོ་གནས་ཀྱང་བཞེས་དགོས་བྱུང་ཡོད་པ་རེད།

རེབ་གོང་གི་ ༡༩༥༨ ལོ་ཙམ་གྱི་གནས་ཚུལ་མདོར་ཙམ་ཞིག་ཆོས་འབྱུང་ས་ཡི་ལྷ་མོར་གསལ་བ་ལྟར་ཞུས་ན། བླ་སེར་དང་མི་དབང་ཆེ་ཆུང་ཕལ་ཆེ་བ་ཞིག་བཙོན་དུ་བཟུང་། ཕ་བུ་དང་དགེ་རྒན་དགེ་ཕྲུག གཉེན་དང་མཛའ་བཤེས་རྣམས་ནང་ཕན་ཚུན་དུ་འཐབ་འཛིང་བྱེད་བཅུག དཔེ་ཆ་རྣམས་གདན་དུ་བཏིང་། སྐུ་གསུང་ཐུགས་རྟེན་བཅག ཆོས་ལ་དད་པ་རྣམས་དགྲ་རུ་བརྩིས། "རྒྱ་ནོར་ཟས་གསུམ་གང་ཡོད་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ནང་ནས་ལེགས་གཅེས་རྣམས་རྒྱ་ཡུལ་དུ་དྲངས་ཏེ་ལྷག་མ་ས་ཞིང་དང་བཅས་པ་ལྷན་གཅིག་ཏུ་བསྡུས་བསྲེས་བྱས་ནས་རྫི་དཔེ་ཟེར་བའི་མིང་བཏགས་ཏེ་མི་མང་ལ་མཉམ་ལས་དང་མཉམ་ཟ་ཡི་སྲོལ་བཙུགས་ཤིང་། མི་རེ་རེ་ལ་གྲོ་ཕྱེ་སྲང་བཞི་ལས་མེད་སྐབས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱིས་ཤིང་ཤུན་དང་ཤིང་ལོ། རྩྭ་དང་མེ་ཏོ། ཐན་ཕྱེ་ས (ཞྭང་བ) ཟ་བ་སོགས་ཀྱིས་མཚོན་མུ་གེ་སོགས་ཀྱི་བསྐལ་བ་ཅིག་ཅར་དུ་ལྷགས། ཚུལ་འདིར་བརྟེན་ནས་ རྫོང་དང་གྲོང་འཁོར་སོགས་ཀྱི་མི་རབས་ཆད་པ་ཡང་མང་དུ་བྱུང་།28 ཞེས་པས་མཚོན་ནོ།།

འཇིགས་མེད་ཐེག་མཆོག་གིས་བརྩམས་པའི་རོང་བོའི་གདན་རབས་སུ། "དེ་ཚུན་གྱི(སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བདུན་པའི་) ལོ་རྒྱུས་དག་ཀྱང་སེམས་དཔའ་ཆེན་པོ་ལ་མཛེས་པའི་རྣམ་ཐར་རྨ་མེད་པ་ཡིན་ན་ཡང་དགོས་དབང་གིས་རེ་ཞིག་འདི་ནས་ཞུ་མཚམས་བྱ"'"29 ཞེས་བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་བཞུགས་སྐབས་ཀྱི་གནས་ཚུལ་རྣམས་དགོས་དབང་ལ་ཞལ་འཕངས་ཏེ་བཀོད་མི་འདུག་ལ། བསེ་ཚང་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྡན་ལགས་ཀྱིས་བརྩམས་པའི་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བདུན་པའི་རྟོགས་བརྗོད་དུའང་། བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་ཕེབས་ནས་ཀྱང་བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་མཛད་པ་བསྐྱངས་པ་དང་ཁོང་ལ་གསུང་ཆོས་གནང་བའི་སྐོར་གྱི་ཚིགས་བཅད་འགའ་རེ་ལས་མི་འདུག ལོན་ཀྱང་གསུང་འབུམ་གྱི་མཛད་པ་པོ་ངོ་སྤྲོད་ཀྱི་སྐབས་སུ་འདི་ལྟར། "...རྗེ་ཉིད་ཀྱང་ ༼བསེ་ཚང་༽ རྒྱལ་ཁྲིམས་ལ་སྒྲུར་ཏེ་ཟེ་ལིང་དུ་བསྐྱལ། བཙོན་ལས་སྐྱབས་མགོན་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་བདུན་པོ་ཆེན་པོ་དང་མཇལ་ཏེ་གསང་ཐབས་ཀྱིས་དཔལ་རྡོ་རྗེ་འཇིགས་བྱེད་ལ་བརྟེན་པའི་ལུས་སྲུང་གི་གསང་བའི་མན་ངག་བཀའ་རྒྱ་མའི་ཁྲིད་དང་། ཉིང་ངེ་འཛིན་གྱི་དབང་བཞི་ཐུན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་ལུང་བཅས་མནོས།"30 ཞེས་གསལ།

27 མི་རིགས་ཁག་གི་མི་སྣར་མཐུན་སྒྲིལ་བྱས་ཏེ་མི་དམངས་ཀྱི་སྲིད་དབང་གསར་དུ་བཙུགས། དབྱང་ཡའོ་ཙོའུ། ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༩༨ རྨ་ལྷོའི་རིག་གནས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ཀྱི་དཔྱད་ཡིག དེབ་དང་པོ། ༡༩༩༢ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༩༩

28 རེབ་གོང་ཆོས་འབྱུང་ས་ཡི་ལྷ་མོ། ཨ་ཁུ་རི་ཁྲོད་པ་བློ་བཟང་མཁྱེན་རབ། ༢༠༠༥ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༢༧༨

29 རོང་བོ་དགོན་ཆེན་གྱི་གདན་རབས་རྫོགས་ལྡན་གཏམ་གྱི་རང་སྒྲ། འཇིགས་མེད་ཐེག་མཆོག མཚོ་སྔོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་། ༡༩༨༨ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༣༣༦

30 མཛད་པ་པོ་ངོ་སྤྲོད་མདོར་བསྡུས། ཁ་བྱའི་སྤྲུ་ཚང་རྡོ་རྗེ་རིན་ཆེན། བསེ་ཚང་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྡན་གྱི་གསུང་རྩོམ་པོད་བཞི་པ། མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་། ༢༠༠༡ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༦

བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་བཞུགས་སྐབས་ཐོག་མར་ཟི་ལིང་ཁྲུལ་དུ་བཞུགས་ཡོད་པ་དང་། ཟི་ལིང་ཁྲུལ་དུ་མཚོ་སྔོན་ཞིང་ཆེན་ངལ་རྩོལ་སྒྱུར་བཀོད་རྭ་ཁག་ཨང་དང་པོ་ནས་ཨང་ལྔ་པ་བར་ཡོད་ལ། དེ་བཞིན་མཚོ་སྔོན་ཞིང་ཆེན་ངལ་རྩོལ་སློབ་སྦྱོང་ཁང་ཞེས་པ་བཅས་བཙོན་ཁང་དྲུག་ཙམ་ཡོད་པ་དེ་དག་ཏུ་མ་མཐའ་ལ་ཡང་ཁྲིན་བསྡོམས་བཙོན་པ་ ༢༧༠༠༠ ཙམ་ཡོད་འདུག31 ཨ་ལགས་ཚ་ཡུས་བསྟན་འཛིན་དཔལ་འབར་མཆོག་གིས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར་ན། དེ་དུས་ "ལོག་སྤྱོད་གྲལ་རིམ" དང་ "གསར་བརྗེར་ངོ་རྒོལ་པ།" བཀས་བཀོད་རྒྱུད་འཛིན་གྱི་བདག་པོ་ (བོད་ཀྱི་བླ་མ་རྣམས་ལ་ཟེར་) སོགས་ཀྱི་ཉེས་ཁྲིམས་བཅད་དེ། "བཙོན་འདུག་ལོ་གསུམ་ཡན་ཆད་ནས་ཚེ་བཙོན་བར་གྱི་ཉེས་ཆད་ཕོག་པ་ཚང་མ་ས་ཐག་རིང་པོའི་ "ངལ་རྩོལ་བསྒྱུར་བཀོད་རྭ་ཁག" སོ་སོར་བསྐྱལ་ཏེ་བཙན་ཤེད་ཀྱིས་ངལ་རྩོལ་སྐྱལ་བ་རེད།"32 ཅེས་གསུངས་འདུག་པ་ལ་དཔགས་ན། རྗེ་སྐལ་ལྡན་པ་འདི་ཉིད་ལ་ཡང་ཐོག་མར་ཟི་ལིང་གི་བཙོན་ཁང་གང་ཞིག་ཏུ་ཁྲིམས་ཐག་གཅོད་ཕྱིར་བཀག་བསྐྱིལ་བྱས་ཡོད་པ་དང་། ཁྲིམས་ཆད་བཅད་རྗེས་ཀ་མདོའི་ཞིང་ར་ཞེས་པའི་བཙོན་ཁང་ལ་བསྐྱལ་ཡོད་པ་རེད།

བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་བཞུགས་སྐབས་ཀྱི་གནས་ཚུལ་མདོར་བསྡུས་ཤིག་ནི་འདི་ལྟར། "གསེར་ལྗོངས་ཡུལ་གྱི་དགྲའི་དཔུང་འཛོམས་ (ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་) ཀྱང་ཚུལ་དེ་ལྟ་བུའི་སྒོ་ནས་སླེང་སྟོབས་ལྷག་པར་བསྐྱེད་དེ་དེང་ཅག་མ་དག་པའི་སྣང་ངོར། ཤིན་ཏུ་མི་སྡུག་པའི་ར་བ་དུ་མས་བསྐོར་བའི་ནང་དུ་དམག་དང་བཙོན་སྲུང་མི་བཟད་པའི་ཚོགས་ཀྱིས་བསྐོར་བའི་དབུས་སུ་བཞུགས་ཏེ། ཟས་གོས་དང་གཏམ་ངན་སྣ་ཚོགས་ཀྱིས་མནར་བ། ཐ་ན་དུར་སློག་གི་རྒྱུན་ཙམ་ཡང་མ་ལུས་པར་འཕྲོག་སྟེ་རས་ནག་གི་དོར་ཧ་གྱོན་དུ་བཅུག་པ་སོགས་བྱས་ཡོད་དོ།།"33 ཞེས་སྐབས་དེར་མཇལ་ཁར་ཡང་ཡང་ཕེབས་པའི་ཨ་ཁུ་བློ་བཟང་མཁྱེན་རབ་མཆོག་གིས་གསུངས་འདུག་པ་ལྟར། བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་དགེ་འདུན་པའི་ན་བཟའ་བསྣམས་མ་བཅུག་པར་སྐྱ་ཆས་བཞེས་ཡོད་པ་རེད། ད་དུང་བཙོན་ཁང་ནང་ངལ་རྩོལ་བྱེད་དགོས་བྱུང་བ་མ་ཟད། ད་དུང་བཤད་གཅེ་གཙང་མ་བཟོ་བའི་ལས་ལ་ཡང་བསྐྱལ་བའི་བཤད་སྒྲོས་སོགས་འདུག་ལ། འཕྲོད་བསྟེན་དང་བཞེས་པ་སོགས་ཀྱི་དཀའ་ངལ་ཆེ་རབས་ཀྱང་དེའི་ཁྲུངས་ཐུབ་ཡིག་ཆ་མ་རྙེད་པས་རེ་ཞིག་བཞག ཨ་ཁུ་རི་ཁྲོད་པ་བློ་བཟང་མཁྱེན་རབ་ཞུ་བ་འདྲིས། ལོ་རེ་རེ་བཞིན་ཐེངས་གཉིས་རེར་བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་སྐྱབས་མགོན་རིན་པོ་ཆེར་ཡོ་བྱད་ཅི་འབྱོར་བསྐྱལ་བར་ཕེབས་34 ཡོད་པ་རེད་ཅེས་ཁོང་གི་ཆོས་འབྱུང་གི་སྔོན་གླེང་དུ་བྲིས་འདུག

བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་དུས་ནམ་ཞིག་ལ་ཚུལ་ཇི་ལྟར་ཕེབས་པའི་སྐོར་རོབ་ཙམ་ཞིག་རྒྱ་ཡིག་ཏུ་འཁོད་པ་ནི་འདི་ལྟར། "༡༩༥༨ ལོ་དེ་མི་རིགས་ཀྱི་མཐོ་རིམ་མི་སྣ་མང་པོར་མཚོན་ན་ཚོད་བགམ་ཞིག་དང་། བཙོན་འདུག་གི་མནར་གཅོད་ཅིག་ཡིན་ལ། དེ་བཞིན་འཇིགས་ཡེར་བའི་རྨི་ལམ་ཞིག་དང་། ཆག་སྒོ་ཞིག་ཀྱང་ཡིན། ལོ་དེའི་ཟླ་བཞི་བར། རྨ་ལྷོའི་ས་ཁུལ་ལ་ལར་གསར་བརྗེ་ངོ་ལོག་གི་དྲག་པོའི་ངོ་རྒོལ་བྱུང་བ་དང་། ཟིང་འཁྲུག་ཞོད་འཇགས་ཀྱི་བརྒྱུད་རིམ་ཁྲོད། རྒྱ་ཆེ་ཐལ་དྲགས་པའི་ནོར་འཁྲུལ་

31 ངའི་ཕ་ཡུལ་གྱི་ཡ་ང་བའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས། བསྟན་འཛིན་དཔལ་འབར། ༡༩༩༨ སྟར་ཐང་དཔར་ཁང་། ཧ་རམ་ས་ལ། ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༨༣༧_༨༨༠

32 ངའི་ཕ་ཡུལ་གྱི་ཡ་ང་བའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས། བསྟན་འཛིན་དཔལ་འབར། ༡༩༩༨ སྟར་ཐང་དཔར་ཁང་། ཧ་རམ་ས་ལ། ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༨༣༧_༨༨༠

33 རེབ་གོང་ཆོས་འབྱུང་ས་ཡི་ལྷ་མོ། ཨ་ཁུ་རི་ཁྲོད་པ་བློ་བཟང་མཁྱེན་རབ། ༢༠༠༥ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༢༧༩

34 རེབ་གོང་ཆོས་འབྱུང་ས་ཡི་ལྷ་མོའི་མཛད་པ་པོ་ངོ་སྤྲོད། རྡོ་རྗེ་དབང་ཕྱུག ༢༠༠༥ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༨

བྱུང་སྐབས ཤར་ཚང་ཡང་དོན་མེད་ཐག་ཞོར་འབྲེང་དུད་ཀྱིས། ཟླ་ ༦ ཚེས་ ༡༦ ཉིན་འཛིན་བཟུང་བཀག་བསྐྱིལ་བྱས་ཏེ་བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་མི་ལོ་ ༢༠ ལྷག་རིང་ཉེས་མེད་སྡུག་ཁུར་བྱེད་དགོས་བྱུང་བ་དང་། ༡༩༧༨ ལོའི་ཟླ་ ༡༡ ཚེས་ ༣༠ ཉིན་ཀ་མདོ་ཞིང་རར[35] སྨན་བཅོས་ཕན་བསྐྱེད་མ་བྱུང་བར་དགུང་ལོ་ ༦༢ སྟེང་སྐུ་གྲོངས།"[36] ཅེས་བྲིས་པ་ལྟར་རེད།

འོན་ཀྱང་ཁོང་གི་བསླུན་གཞི་དེ་ཅི་ཞིག་ཡིན་པ་དང་། སྐུ་འདའ་ཁར་སུ་ཡོད་མེད། ཞལ་ཆེམས་གང་འདྲ་ཡོད་མེད། ཁོང་གི་ཁྲིམས་ཆད་ཀྱི་ཡིག་ཆ་གང་འདྲ་ཡོད་མེད་སོགས་ནི་ད་ཅང་ལྐོག་གྱུར་རེད། ཨ་ལགས་ཙ་ཡུས་ཚང་གིས་ཀ་མདོའི་ཞིང་རའི་སྐོར་ལ་གསུངས་དོན། "ཀ་མདོ་ཞིང་ར། ཞིང་ཆེན་བཙོན་ཁང་དང་པོ། ཞུན་ཧྭ་རྫོང་། ༼འདིར་ ༡༩༥༨ ལོ་ནས་ ༡༩༨༠ བར་བོད་མི་སྟོང་ཕྲག་ཁ་ཤས་ཡོད་པ་མང་ཆེ་བ་མནར་གཅོད་འོག་གྲོངས་པ་རེད། ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་དང་རྒྱ་བོའི་དཔོན་པོ་རྡོ་རྗེ་སོགས་མི་སྣ་གྲགས་ཅན་མང་པོ་མནར་གཅོད་འོག་འདས། ༽"[37] ཞེས་གསུངས་འདུག

ཁོང་དགོངས་པ་རྫོགས་པའི་སྐོར་ལ། རོང་པོའི་གདན་རབས་ལས། "རབ་བྱུང་བཅུ་དྲུག་པའི་ས་རྟ་ལོར་རྒྱལ་བསྟན་སྣང་བ་འཇམ་གླིང་མཁའ་ལ་འཁྲོས་པ་དང་ལྷན་ཅིག་ཧོར་ཟླ་བཅུ་གཅིག་པའི་ཚེས་གསུམ་གྱི་ཞོགས་པའི་ཆུ་ཚོད་བདུན་དང་སྐར་མ་སོ་ལྔའི་སྟེང་རེ་ཞིག་ལྷ་ལྡན་ཞིང་ལ་ངལ་གསོ་བར་ཐེབས་སོ།།"[38] ཞེས་བཀོད་པ་ལྟར་ལགས་ཤིང་། ཆུ་བཟང་མཆོག་སྤྲུལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་བློ་བཟང་བསྟན་པའི་དབང་ཕྱུག་མཆོག (1914–2000) གིས་སྐུ་གདུང་ལ་བདག་བྱས་པའི་སྐོར་བསེ་ཚང་གི་རྟོགས་བརྗོད་ན་གསལ།[39]

ཆུ་བཟང་སྤྲུལ་སྐུ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་དྲུག་པ་འདི་ནི་རྗེ་སྐལ་ལྡན་པ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བདུན་པའི་སྐུ་མཆེད་ཅིག་ཡིན་འདུག་ལ། ཁོང་ཡང་ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་དང་ལྷན་དུ་བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་ཐེབས་འདུག ༡༩༥༨ ལོར་བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་ཚུད་པའི་བརྒྱུད་རིམ་རོམ་ཙམ་ཞིག་ཁོང་གི་རྣམ་ཐར་དུ་གསལ་བ་འདི་ལྟར། "ཧོར་ཟླ་ལྔ་པའི་ཚེས་ཉེར་བཞིའི་ཉིན་རྫོང་ནས་རྒྱུ་མཚན་ཅི་ཡང་མེད་པར

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35 མཚོ་སྔོན་ཞིང་ཆེན་མཚོ་ཤར་ས་ཁུལ་གྱི་ཧྭ་ལུང་རྫོང་གི་ཀ་མདོ་གྲོང་བརྡལ། ༼ཀ་མདོར་ཡོད་པའི་བཙོན་ཁང་དེ་ནི་ ༡༩༥༨ ལོའི་ནག་ཉེས་ཆེ་གྲས་ཀྱི་བཙོན་པ་རྣམས་འཛུག་ས་རེད་ཅེས་ཡུལ་འདིར་ཡོངས་གྲགས་ཀྱིས་བཤད་རྒྱུན་ཡོད་པ་རེད་ཅེས་སྒོ་མང་དགེ་བཤེས་བློ་བསྟན་ལགས་ཀྱིས་ཕྲན་ལ་གསུངས་བྱུང་། ༽

36 在活佛与州长的人生座标上——隆务寺第七世寺主活佛、黄南州人民政府第一任州长夏日仓评传 ༼བླ་མ་དང་ཀྲིག་ཀྲང་གི་མི་ཚེའི་སྟོལ་མཚམས་ན།_རོང་བོ་དགོན་པའི་དགོན་བདག་བླ་མ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བདུན་པ་དང་རྨ་ལྷོ་ཀྲིག་མི་དམངས་སྲིད་གཞུང་གི་ཀྲིག་ཀྲང་དང་པོ་ཤར་ཚང་གི་སྐུ་ཚེའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས།༽ རྨ་ལྷོའི་འདས་པའི་ལོ་དྲུག་ཅུར་ཕྱི་མིག་ལྟ་བ། འདས་པའི་ཀྲིག་ཀྲང་རྣམས་ཀྱི་རྗེས་དྲན། ༢༠༡༠ ལོར་དཔར། རྒྱ་ཡིག ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༢༥ (ལུང་འདྲེན་འདི་བཞིན་བཀྲ་ཤིས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ལགས་ཀྱིས་བསྒྱུར་གནང་བྱུང་།)

37 ངའི་ཕ་ཡུལ་གྱི་ཡ་ང་བའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས། བསྟན་འཛིན་དཔལ་འབར། ༡༩༩༧ སྟར་ཐང་དཔར་ཁང་། ཏ་རམ་ས་ལ། ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༤༣༨

38 རོང་བོ་དགོན་ཆེན་གྱི་གདན་རབས་རྫོགས་ལྡན་གཏམ་གྱི་རང་སྒྲ། འཇིགས་མེད་ཐེག་མཆོག མཚོ་སྔོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་། ༡༩༨༨ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༣༣༦

39 *"དེ་ཆེ་འགྲོ་བའི་བླ་མ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་རྗེ།། ཆུ་བཟང་སྤྲུལ་མཆོག་བསྟན་པའི་དབང་ཕྱུག་གིས།། སྐུ་གདུང་རིན་ཆེན་དཔག་བསམ་ལྗོན་པ་ཆེར།། སྤྱི་ཞུའི་མཛད་སྒོ་ཉིན་མཚན་འདའ་བར་བཙོན།།"* རེབ་གོང་སྐྱབས་མགོན་བདུན་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་རྟོགས་བརྗོད། བསེ་ཚང་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྡན་གྱི་གསུང་རྩོམ་པོད་བཞི་པ། མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་། ༢༠༠༡ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༤༨༠

(ཆུ་བཟང་ཚང་ལ་) ལག་ལྷུགས་བརྒྱབ་ཐོག་བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་བཙུག རྫོང་ཐོག་ཏུ་ཉིན་བཅོ་ལྔ་འགོར་རྗེས་ཟི་ལིང་དུ་བསྐྱལ་ཏེ་བཙོན་འཇུག་བྱས། ཟི་ལིང་བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་རྗེ་ཉིད་ལ་སྐྱོ་པོ་གདུག་རྩུབ་ཅན་བརྗེ་རེས་ཀྱིས་ལན་གྲངས་བརྒྱ་ལྷག་འདྲི་རྟོག་བྱས། འདྲི་ཐེངས་རེར་ཁྲོད་ལ་རྒྱུ་རྫས་རྩ་ཆེན་ཅི་ཞིག་ཡོད། གསེར་དངུལ་སོགས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་རྣམས་གང་དུ་སྦས་ཡོད། མི་སུ་དང་སུ་ར་ཤེས། འབྲེལ་བ་ཇི་ལྟར་བྱས་ཡོད། རྒྱ་གར་ནས་རྒྱུ་རྫས་གང་འདྲ་ཁྱེར་ཡོང་། ཆུ་ཚོད་དང་མེ་མདའ་ཁྱེར་ཡོང་བ་རྣམས་གང་དུ་བཞག་ཡོད། ཆོས་བཏོན་པ་དང་མི་ལ་འཚམས་རྟགས་བྱིན་ནས་འབྲེལ་བ་བྱས་པས་ཁྲོད་གསར་བརྗེའི་ངོ་ལོག་པའི་ཉེས་ཅན་རེད་ཟེར་ནས། མཐོ་རིམ་བཙོན་མ་ཞེས་པའི་ཉེས་མིང་བཀལ། ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༥༨ ལོ་ནས་ ༡༩༧༠ ལོའི་བར་ཟི་ལིང་ཁན་ཧྲིན་ཧུ་བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་མུན་ཁང་ནང་མི་ལོ་བཅུ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་ཡུན་ལ་འཐབ་རྩོད་དང་སྡུག་སྦྱོང་ཚད་མེད་ཀྱིས་སྐྱུ་སྒྲོག་མ་ཆད་ཙམ་གྱི་ངང་བཞུགས། ར་ཁོ་ཚང་། ཤར་ཚང་། ཏའུ་ལན་ཚང་། བཙན་པོ་ཚང་། ཐུའུ་བཀན་ཚང་། གསེར་ཁྲི་ཚང་། མི་ཉག་ཚང་། སྒོ་མི་དཔོན་པོ་བཀྲ་ལོ། སྒོ་མི་དགེ་བསྙེན། ཆབ་ཆ་དགོན་གསར་གྱི་ཨ་ལགས་སེ་ར་མཁན་ཆེན་སོགས་བཙོན་གྲོགས་ཡིན་འདུག” ཅེས་དང་། དེ་ནས་ ༡༩༧༠ ལོར་ཕྱིན་ཚྭ་ཚེ་ཞིང་ཆེན་གྱི་བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་བོད་ཀྱི་བཙོན་པ་ ༢༩༠ དང་ལྷན་དུ་ཕེབས་ནས་ངལ་རྩོལ་གྱི་ལས་ཀར་ཞུགས་ཡོད་པ་དང་། དེ་ནས། “༡༩༧༢ ལོར་ཀ་མདོའི་བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་བསྐྱལ་ཏེ་མི་ལོ་གསུམ་གྱི་ཡུན་ལ་དཀའ་སྡུག་སྣ་ཚོགས་ཉམས་སུ་བཞེས་ཏེ་བཞུགས། ཕྱི་ལོ་ ༡༩༧༥ ལོའི་སྤྱི་ཟླ་བཅུ་གཅིག་པའི་ནང་བཙོན་གྲོལ་ཐོབ། ལོ་གསུམ་དང་ཟླ་བ་བརྒྱད་ཀྱི་རིང་ལ་ཀ་མདོར་སེལ་ར་སྲུང་བ་སོགས་འཚོ་ཐབས་ཕྲན་བུ་ལ་བརྟེན་ཏེ་མི་བཞུགས་ཐབས་མེད་བྱུང་།” ཞེས་གསུངས་འདུག40 དེས་ན། ཆུ་བཟང་སྤྲུལ་སྐུ་འདི་ཉིད་ཟི་ལིང་དང་ཀ་མདོ་གཉིས་ཀར་ཤར་ཚང་དང་ལྷན་དུ་བཞུགས་ཡོད་པ་གསལ་ལ། འདི་གཙོད་ཀྱི་རྣམ་པ་དེ་དག་དང་ཉེས་ཆད་དེ་དག་ནི་ཤར་ཚང་ལའང་ཐོག་ཡོད་པ་གོར་མ་ཆག ཤར་ཚང་དགོངས་པ་རྫོགས་པའི་སྐབས་སུ་ཆུ་བཟང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ས་དེ་གར་བཙོན་གྲོལ་གྱི་རྣམ་པར་བཞུགས་ཡོད་པས་སྐུ་གདུང་ལ་བདག་ཉར་གནང་བ་ཡིན་འདུག

ཤར་ཚང་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བདུན་པ་འདི་ཉིད་མྱ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པའི་གནམ་དེ་རེབ་གོང་གི་མི་དམངས་ཀྱི་རྣ་ལམ་དུ་སླེབས་སྐབས། རྣམ་ཐར་དད་པའི་མཛེས་རྒྱན་ལས། “ཕྱག་ན་པད་མོ་སྐྱབས་མགོན་བདུན་པ་ཆེན་པོ་གང་ཉིད་ཡུལ་ཀ་མདོའི་ཁྲི་མོན་དུ་བཞུགས་མུས་སུ་ཞིང་འདིའི་སྐུ་ཚེའི་འཕྲིན་ལས་བསྡུས་པའི་དུས་ལ་བབས་ནས་མཛད་པའི་མཐའ་མ་བདག་གིར་བཞེས་པ་ལ། རེབ་གོང་གཙོ་བོར་གྱུར་པའི་དད་ལྡན་གདུལ་བྱ་མ་ལུས་པ་གདུང་བའི་མུན་ཁྲོད་དུ་འཁྱམས་ཤིང་། ངོ་བྱད་མཆི་མས་གཡོགས་ཏེ་མྱ་ངན་གྱི་སེམས་ཁོངས་འཁྲུག་པའི་གྲང་རླུང་དྲག་པོར་ལྡང་བ་ན། རེབ་གོང་སྟོད་སྨད་བར་གསུམ་དང་ཁྱིམ་ཚང་སོ་སོས་འགྲན་བསྡུར་དང་ཤར་ཐམས་ཅད་མཁྱེན་པའི་ཐུགས་དགོངས་ཡོངས་སུ་རྫོགས་པར་བྱ་བའི་ཆེད་དུ་སྟོང་མཆོད་དང་། རྒྱུན་འཇུག སྨན་བླ་འདོན་པ་སོགས་ཆོས་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་བྱ་བ་གློས་མི་ཤོང་བ་བྱས།”41 ཞེས་བཀོད་པ་ལྟར་ལགས་སོ།།

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40 ཆོས་སྡེ་ཆེན་པོ་དཔལ་ལྡན་འབྲས་སྤུངས་བཀྲ་ཤིས་སྒོ་མང་གྲྭ་ཚང་གི་ཆོས་འབྱུང་ཆོས་དུང་གཡས་སུ་འཁྱིལ་བའི་སྒྲ་དབྱངས་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་སོ།། འབྲས་སྤུངས་མཁན་ཁྲི་བསྟན་པ་བསྟན་འཛིན། སྒོ་མང་དཔེ་མཛོད་ཁང་། ༢༠༠༣། ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༥༩༡_༥༩༢

41 རྗེ་དགེ་འདུན་བསྟན་འཛིན་གྱི་རྣམ་ཐར་དད་པའི་འཇུག་ངོགས། རོང་བོ་བློ་བཟང་སྙན་གྲགས། བོད་ཀྱི་དུས་བབ། ༢༠༠༥ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༧༨

ཡང་ཆོ་ཧྲན་ཞབས་དྲུང་ཚང་གི་རང་རྣམ་ཁ་སྐོང་མེ་ཏོག་བཞད་པའི་འཁྲི་ཤིང་ལས། ཆོ་ཧྲན་ཞབས་དྲུང་ཚང་དགུང་ལོ་རེ་དགུ་བཞེས་པའི་མགོ་ཟླའི་ཚེས་གཅིག་ཉིན། "ཟི་ལིང་དུ་བཞུགས་སྐབས་ཉིན་གང་བོར་ཀླུང་དམར་དྲག་པོ་ལངས་ཏེ་ཟི་ལིང་གྲོང་ཁྱེར་གྱི་གནམ་ས་བར་སྣང་ས་ཐལ་གྱིས་གང་ཞིང་ཕྱིས་སུ་ཐོས་པ་ན་ཧ་ལམ་མདོ་སྨད་ས་ཁུལ་ཀུན་ཏུ་ཀླུང་དམར་གྱིས་ཤིང་སྡོང་བཅག་པ་དང་། ལམ་འགྲོ་བཅད་པ་སོགས་ཡུལ་ངན་བྱུང་མ་མྱོང་བ་ཞིག་བྱུང་བར་གླེང་། སྐབས་དེར་བླ་མ་རིན་པོ་ཆེས་འདི་སྐྱེས་ཆེན་དམ་པ་ཞིག་གི་དགོངས་པ་ཞི་བའི་དབྱིངས་སུ་གཏད་པ་མིན་ནམ། རྒྱལ་བའི་གསུང་རབ་ལས་འབྱུང་བའི་རྟགས་མཚན་ལ་བསམས་ན་ཕལ་ཆེར་ཡིན་རྒྱུ་རེད་སྙམ་གསུངས་པ་མ་གཏོགས་གནས་ཚུལ་ངོ་མ་གསན་མེད། ཆོས་བདུན་ཉིན་རོང་བོ་དགོན་ཆེན་ནས་གཞུང་བརྒྱ་སླ་བ་དགེ་འདུན་དར་རྒྱས་དང་། སྐྱབས་མཆོག་བདུན་པ་མཆོག་གི་སྐུ་དབོན་འཇིགས་མེད་ལྷུན་གྲུབ་དངོས་ཕེབས་ཀྱིས། ཀ་མདོ་གདོང་དམར་སྣའི་ཉེ་འདབས་ན་བཞུགས་པའི་༧སྐྱབས་རྗེ་མཚུངས་པ་མེད་པ་གསེར་ཕྱོགས་ཡུལ་གྱི་གོང་ས་སྐྱབས་མགོན་བདུན་པ་ཆེན་པོ་དག་ཞིང་དུ་ཕེབས་པའི་ཚུལ་ཞུས་...... ཐུགས་སྐྱོ་ཚད་མེད་གནང་།" ཞེས་བཀོད་འདུག[42]

ཚང་བྲིས་པའི་དུས་ནས་བཟུང་། ཡུལ་འདིར་མཁས་པའི་སྐན་པ་ཆེ་བའི་ཡོངས་འཛིན་དམ་པ་དག་ཚུལ་བཞིན་བསྟེན་ནས་མཁས་གྲུབ་ཀྱི་གོ་འཕང་མཐོན་པོར་སླེབ་ཟིན་པའི་རེབ་གོང་གི་ཉི་མ་འདི་ལ་མཚོན་ན། དགུང་ལོ་བཞི་བཅུར་སོན་ཙམ་ནས་བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་ཚུད་པ་དང་། བཙོན་ཁང་ནས་མི་ལོ་ཉི་ཤུ་བསྐྱལ་རྗེས་དགོངས་པ་རྫོགས་པ་རེད་ལ། དེ་ནི་བཙོན་ཁང་དུ་ཉིན་རེའི་དཀའ་སྡུག་གི་མཛད་པ་ཙི་ཡིན་དང་ཟི་ལིང་ནས་ཀ་མདོ་ལ་དུས་ནམ་ཞིག་ལ་སྤྱོས་པ་སོགས་དང་འབྲེལ་བའི་རྣམ་ཐར་རྣམས་འཇིག་རྟེན་འདི་ནས་ནུབ་ཉེར་ཆེ་སོང་། རྣམ་ཐར་དེ་དག་ཁ་སྐོང་བྱ་རྒྱུར་ཡང་ཡུལ་དུས་ཀྱི་རྐྱེན་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་དགོས་ངེས་པའི་ས་བོན་རྣམས་ཚང་དཀའ་བ་དང་། ཡིག་ཆ་གཞན་ནས་ཀྱང་རྙེད་དཀའ་བ་འདུག འདི་ཡང་རེབ་གོང་གི་ཉི་མ་ནུབ་རྗེས་ཀྱི་མུན་པའི་ཆ་ཞིག་ཏུ་འཁྱམས་སོ།།

ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཚང་གི་སྐུ་ཚེའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་དང་འབྲེལ་བའི་རྒྱ་ཡིག་གི་དཔེ་ཆ[43] འི་གྲས་སུ། ཁོང་གི་སྐུ་ཚ་རྡོ་རྗེ་ལགས་ཀྱིས་བྲིས་པའི་ "ངའི་ཨ་ཁུ་ཤར་ཚང་གི་རྗེས་དྲན།" ཞེས་པ་དང་། དེ་བཞིན་ཕང་རུང་ཏེ་ཞེས་པ་ཤར་ཚང་དང་ལྷན་དུ་དབུས་སུ་བསྐྱོད་མྱོང་བ་ཞིག་གིས་༡༩༨༨ ལོའི་ཟླ་བ་ ༡ ཚེས་ ༢༡ ལ་བཤད་ཅིང་ཀྲའོ་ཆིན་དབྱང་གིས་བྲིས་པའི་ "བླ་མ་ཤར་ཚང་གིས་བོད་ཞི་བའི་བཅིངས་འགྲོལ་འོད་སྣང་འབར་བའི་ཤོག་ངོས་གཅིག་བྲིས་པ།_ཤར་ཚང་དང་ལྷན་དུ་བོད་ལ་བསྐྱོད་པའི་དྲན་ཐོ་དུམ་བུ་ཞིག" ཅེས་པ། ཡང་། རོང་བོ་དགོན་པའི་དགེ་འདུན་པ་བྱིངས་འདྲེན་ཆེན་མོ་ཟུར་པ་རྡོ་རྗེ་ཐར་ལགས་ཀྱིས་ ༡༩༨༧ ལོར་བྲིས་པའི་ "མེས་རྒྱལ་གཅིག་གྱུར་དང་མི་རིགས་མཐུན་སྒྲིལ་གྱི་ཆེད་དུ་འབད་བརྩོན་བྱས་པའི་བླ་མ་བཟང་པོ་ཞིག_ཤར་ཚང་གིས་བོད་རང་སྐྱོང་ལྗོངས་ལ་རྒྱ་མིའི་ལས་བྱེད་བཞི་ཉིན་ཁ་ལས་བསྐྱབས་པའི་དྲན་ཐོ་དུམ་བུ་ཞིག" ཅེས་པའི་རྩོམ་ཡིག་གི་ནང་ནས་ཀྱང་འདིར་ཁ་སྐོང་དགོས་པ་རེ་ཟུང་རེ་འདུག་མོད། འདིར་རེ་ཞིག་བཞག་ཡོད་དོ།།

42 མ་ཧཱ་པཎྜི་ཏ་རྗེ་བཙུན་རྗེ་འཇིགས་མེད་རིགས་པའི་བློ་གྲོས་མཆོག་གི་གསུང་འབུམ། གླེགས་བམ་གཉིས་པ། མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་། ༢༠༠༧ ཤོག་གྲངས་ ༢༨༣_༢༨༩

43 རྨ་ལྷོའི་རིག་གནས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་རྒྱུ་ཆ། ཐེངས་གཉིས་པ་ ༡༩༨༩ ༼ནང་ཁུལ་ཡིག་ཆ། རྒྱ་ཡིག༽



1951 年同仁县各族各界欢迎赴藏促和谈凯旋而归的夏日仓及随行人员时合影

དབུས་གཙང་འཆིང་གྲོལ་ཞུ་ཡོན་༧ཤར་ཧྲ་སི་རིན་པོ་ཆེར་རེབ་གོང་མི་རིགས་དང་ལས་རིགས་སོ་སོས་དགའ་བསུ་མཛད་པའི་དཔར།
༡༩༥༡_༡༢_༢༥



1953 年 10 月黄南藏族自治区筹备委员会主任委员全体合影

 རྨ་ལྷོ་ཁྲིག་འཛུགས་པའི་གྲ་སྒྲིག་ཚོགས་འདུའི་སྐབས་ཀྱི་མི་སྣ།



༡༩༥༣ ལོའི་རྨ་ལྷོ་བོད་རིགས་རང་སྐྱོང་ཁུལ་མི་དམངས་ཆབ་སྲིད་གཙོ་འཛིན་དང་གཞོན་པ། རྒྱུན་ལས་བཅས།

དཔྱད་གཞིའི་ཡིག་ཆ།

བསེ་ཚང་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྡན། ༢༠༠༡. རེབ་གོང་སྐྱབས་མགོན་བདུན་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་རྟོགས་བརྗོད། [The biography of the great seventh of Reb gong] བསེ་ཚང་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྡན་གྱི་གསུང་རྩོམ་པོད་བཞི་པ། མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་།

འཇིགས་མེད་དམ་ཆོས་རྒྱ་མཚོ། ༡༩༩༧. ཤར་སྐལ་ལྡན་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་སྐྱེས་རབས་རྣམ་ཐར་བཞུགས་སོ། [The life stories of Shar Skal ldan rgya mtsho] མཚོ་སྔོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་།

འཇིགས་མེད་ཐེག་མཆོག། ༡༩༨༨. རོང་བོ་དགོན་ཆེན་གྱི་གདན་རབས་རྫོགས་ལྡན་གཏམ་གྱི་རང་སྒྲ། [History of the Great Monastery of Rong bo] མཚོ་སྔོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་།

འཇིགས་མེད་ཐེག་མཆོག། ༢༠༠༧. རང་རྣམ་ཁ་སྐོང་སྐལ་བཟང་མེ་ཏོག་བཞད་པའི་འཕྲི་ཤིང་། མ་ཧཱ་པཎྜི་ཏ་རྗེ་བཙུན་རྗེ་འཇིགས་མེད་རིགས་པའི་བློ་གྲོས་མཆོག་གི་གསུང་འབུམ། གླེགས་བམ་དང་པོ། མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་།

ཚེ་ཏན་ཞབས་དྲུང་འཇིགས་མེད་རིགས་པའི་བློ་གྲོས། ༢༠༠༧. རྟོགས་བརྗོད་གདུང་སེལ་སྨན་གྱི་ལྗོན་པ། མ་ཧཱ་པཎྜི་ཏ་རྗེ་བཙུན་རྗེ་འཇིགས་མེད་རིགས་པའི་བློ་གྲོས་མཆོག་གི་གསུང་འབུམ། གླེགས་བམ་གཉིས་པ། མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་།

པཎ་ཆེན་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་དགུ་པ་བློ་བཟང་ཐུབ་བསྟན་ཆོས་ཀྱི་ཉི་མ་གང་གི་དགུང་ཚིགས་དང་བསྟུན་པའི་མཛད་རྣམ་རགས་བསྒྲིགས། ༢༠༠༠. བོད་ཀྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་རིག་གནས་དཔྱད་གཞིའི་རྒྱུ་ཆ་བདམས་བསྒྲིགས། སྤྱིའི་འདོན་ཐེངས་ ༢༢ པ། མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་།

རོང་བོ་བློ་བཟང་སྣན་གྲགས། ༢༠༠༥. རྗེ་དགེ་འདུན་བསྟན་འཛིན་གྱི་རྣམ་ཐར་དད་པའི་འཇུག་ངོགས། བོད་ཀྱི་དུས་བབ།

ཨ་ཁུ་རི་ཁྲོད་པ་བློ་བཟང་མཁྱེན་རབ། ༢༠༠༥. རེབ་གོང་ཆོས་འབྱུང་ས་ཡི་ལྷ་མོ།

མདོ་སྨད་པ་ཡོན་ཏན་རྒྱ་མཚོ། ༡༩༥༩. དགོང་ས་རྒྱལ་མཆོག་བཅུ་བཞི་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་སྐུའི་གཅེན་པོ་སྐུ་འབུམ་ཁྲི་ཟུར་སྟག་མཚེར་མཆོག་སྤྲུལ་ཐུབ་བསྟན་འཇིགས་མེད་ནོར་བུའི་ཐུན་མོང་མཛད་རིམ་བསྡུས་དོན་དཔྱོད་ལྡན་ཡོངས་ལ་གཏམ་དུ་བྱ་བ་སྟོན་མེད་ལེགས་བཤད་ངེས་དོན་སྤྲིན་གྱི་ཕོ་ཉ།

བཀྲ་ཤིས་རྣམ་རྒྱལ། རྡོ་རྗེ། ༡༩༩༢. རེབ་གོང་བཅིངས་གྲོལ་བྱུས་པའི་སྔ་གཞུག རྨ་ལྷོའི་རིག་གནས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ཀྱི་དཔྱད་ཡིག རེབ་དང་པོ།

ཀྲའོ་ཆིན་དབྱང་དང་རྡོ་རྗེ། ༡༩༩༨. 爱国民主人士夏日仓生平. 赵清阳, 多杰 [རྒྱལ་གཅེས་དམངས་གཙོའི་མི་སྣ་ཤར་ཚང་གི་སྐུ་ཆེའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས།] རྨ་ལྷོའི་རིག་གནས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་རྒྱུ་ཆ། ཐེངས་གཉིས་པ་ ནང་ཁྲུལ་ཡིག་ཆ།

མཛད་རྣམ་རྒྱ་ཆེན་སྙིང་རྗེའི་རོལ་མཚོ། ༢༠༠༩. ནོར་གླིང་བོད་ཀྱི་རིག་གཞུང་གཅེས་སྐྱོང་ཁང་ནས་དཔར་སྐྲུན་བྱས། གླེགས་བམ་གསུམ་པ།

Thubten Jigme Norbu. 1986. Tibet is My Country: Autobiography of Thubten Jigme Norbu, Brother of the Dalai Lama. London: Wisdom Publications.

དབྱང་ཡའོ་ཅོའུ། ༡༩༩༢. མི་རིགས་ཁག་གི་མི་སྣར་མཐུན་སྒྲིལ་བྱས་ཏེ་མི་དམངས་ཀྱི་སྲིད་དབང་གསར་དུ་བཙུགས། རྨ་ལྷོའི་རིག་གནས་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ཀྱི་དཔྱད་ཡིག རེབ་དང་པོ།

ཁ་བྱའི་གླུ་ཚང་རྡོ་རྗེ་རིན་ཆེན། ༢༠༠༡. མཛད་པ་པོ་ངོ་སྤྲོད་མདོར་བསྡུས། བསེ་ཚང་བློ་བཟང་དཔལ་ལྡན་གྱི་གསུང་རྩོམ་པོད་བཞི་པ། མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་།

བསྟན་འཛིན་དཔལ་འབར། ༡༩༩༨. ངའི་ཕ་ཡུལ་གྱི་ཡ་ང་བའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས། རྡ་རམ་ས་ལ་སྣར་ཐང་དཔར་ཁང་།

在活佛与州长的人生座标上——隆务寺第七世寺主活佛、黄南州人民政府第一任州长夏日仓评传 (བླ་མ་དང་ཀྲིག་ཀྲང་གི་མི་ཚེའི་སྟོལ་མཚམས་ན།_རོང་བོ་དགོན་པའི་དགོན་བདག་བླ་མ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བདུན་པ་དང་རྨ་ལོ་ཀྲིག་མི་དམངས་སྲིད་གཞུང་གི་ཀྲིག་ཀྲང་དང་པོ་ཤར་ཚང་གི་སྐུ་ཆེའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས།) རྨ་ལྷོའི་འདས་པའི་ལོ་དྲུག་ཅུར་ཕྱི་མིག་ལྟ་བ། འདས་པའི་ཀྲིག་ཀྲང་རྣམས་ཀྱི་རྗེས་དྲན། ༢༠༡༠། རྒྱ་ཡིག

འབྲས་སྤུངས་མཁན་ཁྲི་བསྟན་པ་བསྟན་འཛིན། ༢༠༠༣. ཆོས་སྡེ་ཆེན་པོ་དཔལ་ལྡན་འབྲས་སྤུངས་བཀྲ་ཤིས་སྒོ་མང་གྲྭ་ཚང་གི་ཆོས་འབྱུང་ཆོས་དུང་གཡས་སུ་འཁྱིལ་བའི་སྒྲ་དབྱངས་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་སོ།། སྒོ་མང་དཔེ་མཛོད་ཁང་། །

UNDERSTANDING RELIGION AND POLITICS IN A MDO: THE SDE KHRI ESTATE AT BLA BRANG MONASTERY

Paul K. Nietupski

Introduction: Crossing Borders in A mdo

The Bla brang, Reb kong, and neighboring communities were subdivisions of the larger A mdo Tibetan region, with functioning political, economic, and social authority structures.[1] The Sde khri Estate was part of the Bla brang community, one of some thirty-two such estates in greater Bla brang, and an example of A mdo's authority structures. It serves as the case study for this essay. Understanding A mdo's historical political structures is complicated by A mdo's location on ethnic borderlands, where communities negotiated, battled, and traded with their neighbors. As Gray Tuttle and others show, A mdo's location on the borders of Chinese, Muslim, and Mongol cultures resulted in cross border descriptions and definitions that changed over time. The borderlands location moreover necessitated different webs of negotiations and re-negotiations in efforts to assert and preserve regional autonomy on all sides (Tuttle, 2011).

Bla brang and Reb kong shared A mdo's social and political cultures, and they shared parts of the historical Kha gya tsho drug region that extended from northeastern Qinghai to Gtsos (Ch. Hezuo) (Ban de khar, 1989, 1994, 1995). Still, like other local A mdo communities Bla brang and Reb kong had regional qualities in their exercise of Tibetan Buddhism and observances of local religions, in regional language and accent, in their affiliations with specific estates, and in their historical relations with each other. From a larger perspective, their respective interactions with neighboring Chinese, Manchus, Mongols, and Muslims were sometimes similar, but at times they preferred to develop individual ties with outside authorities. The Chinese and Manchus for their part placed Bla brang in Gansu and Reb kong in Qinghai Province, and were at a loss about how to

[1] Samuel argues for an "ideological-cultural cohesion without a centralized political authority." Some data on A mdo governance and on the conflict over the succession of the 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa is from Nietupski, 2011: 54–64, 125–127, used here by permission of the publisher.

engage A mdo as a single unit, likewise often developing diplomatic ties with individual regional authorities.

These cross border "national" and "inter-national" relations were made difficult by the broad range of visions of regional authority. The Chinese and Manchu visions are relatively well known, and there are many examples of local sensibilities. The *Ocean Annals* for example mentions the "border between Tibet and Salar" (*bod dang za lar gyi mtshams su*…), treating the Salar territory on equal terms with Tibet, here extended to A mdo (Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, 1972: II.163b2). Jacoby has shown that the A mdo Dbal shul mgo log gser thar did not consider themselves part of Tibet or of China, and Dbal mang Pandita routinely refers to China, Mongolia, and Tibet with the same terminology (Jacoby, 2011; Dbal mang dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, 1974). One Chinese emissary noted that A mdo nomads he encountered in Rnga ba (in modern Sichuan) recognized the political authority of Bla brang, not of Sichuan Province (Gong Ziying, 1933: 23, 30; *Gan qing zang bianqu kaocha ji*, 1936: 84).[2] A mdo's status with respect to central Tibet, to its neighboring civilizations, and in light of its internal divisions—like those between Bla brang and Reb kong—merit our attention. This essay argues that A mdo was a recognizable unit, but that its unity was based on criteria very different from that of other governments.

Bla brang's, Reb kong's, and others' shared history in the A mdo region is not fully studied, but their contacts were nonetheless strong. From this perspective, modern Chinese provincial borders, and modern scholarly research area specialties artificially divide what was, and to an extent remains a contiguous cultural unit. The Mongols who sponsored Bla brang's formal 1709 founding in Rtse rkhog were clearly active on both sides of the border. Prominent lords from the Reb kong-affiliated community at Zho 'ong, their complex relationships with Bla brang's Kho tshe and Dngul rwa, and their support for the First 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa are well documented ('Jam dbyangs bsod nams grags pa, 2010: 538–576; Sha bo padma rgyal, 2007: 121–122, 158–164; Kun mkhyen dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po, 1991: 148–149). While the Mongol sponsorship of Bla brang Monastery is well known, the *Ocean Annals* also records the donation of the summer pasture for the site of Bla brang Monastery by the Reb kong affiliated Rgan kya Tibetan lords, which relationship is also noted in Chinese

[2] In *Gan qing zang bianqu kaocha ji*, 1936: 84 it is stated that the Tibetans in northern Sichuan (Xikang) and Qinghai regarded Bla brang as their capital city (Ch. *shou du*) and A mdo Tibetan dialect as their primary language.

sources (Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, 1982: 547.20; Zhang Qiyun (1935) 1970: 75–76).[3] The list of interactions is long and appears in the careers of the Sde khri lamas, several of whom had deep Mongol roots (Nietupski, 2011: 125–126; Rin chen rgyal po & Reb gong rdo rje thar, 1995: 94–102).

The overlapping and mixing of languages, political systems, and cultures and religions makes A mdo's cultures rather kaleidoscopic in their diversity. One result of this diversity is the scholarly habit to cast A mdo in terms of one or another of the regional dominant civilizations and in those social and political categories and terms, whether exclusively Manchu, Mongol, often Chinese, or even Tibetan. All of these perspectives, labels, and data are useful, but reliance on one historical perspective or dominant place as evidence of unilateral political sovereignty can obfuscate the actual A mdo environment. The border situation here can be understood from different perspectives (Tuttle, 2011; White, 1991; Scott, 2009; Lieberman, 2010; Horstmann and Wadley, 2006; "The end of the enclaves," 2010), but A mdo's borders should be understood on their own terms.

Diverse A mdo

Greater A mdo governing offices, both nomadic and monastic were not built on Chinese, Manchu, Marxist, or Western democratic models, even if they are described in those terms in documents and studies. A mdo offices were instead "social relations of obligation," built on kinship, kinship-like, and non-kin relationships. These relationships were located, most visible, and ritually celebrated in networks of Buddhist monasteries. A good example of this structure is the A mdo *shog pa* and *tsho ba* groups under the jurisdiction of the monastery-centered Sde khri Estate. These groups and their homelands were typically under the jurisdiction of monasteries, or more simply, they were the revenue generating properties of monasteries.

Tibetan Buddhist institutions were key locations of authority in A mdo, but the institutional and religious structures defy uniform descriptions. Communities like the relatively late, eighteenth-century Dge lugs pa Bla brang Monastery did not fully displace other religious groups to the extent in seventeenth century Lhasa, instead assimilated or tolerated them.

[3] Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, 1982: 547.20: *kha gya'i be hu gnyis kyis sa phul te dgon pa btab bas byas pa che rkang tsha'i gser kha glang gya dang nye bar rong po dang sa mtshams 'dzin byed du bzhag*.

In addition to the Dge lugs pa groups, Bon, Rnying ma, local tantric experts, and other sectarian Tibetan Buddhist groups, sun worshippers, hermits, Muslims, Daoists and other Chinese, Christians and other religious persons of broad description were active in A mdo, and in Bla brang's estate.

The different taxonomies or shifting clusters of religions and associated political visions co-existing in A mdo can be understood as a "polythetic" phenomenon, a biological grouping device applied to social anthropology by Rodney Needham (Needham, 1975: 349–369). Just as a rope made of several different strands contains similarities, so religious beliefs and practices and political authorities in Bla brang's, and Reb kong's communities-at-large have only some—but not all—similar factors. We should note as well that while the texture of a rope or a biological class is uniform, A mdo's society varied in places close to and far from its actual borders, and over time. Still, Needham's theory is helpful.

Based on this theory the criteria for inclusion in the greater A mdo estates include the requirement that there be only some common features in all communities; all communities do not have to possess a single common feature. That is, even if Bla brang, a Dge lugs pa monastery was the dominant religious institution and political authority, this did not at all preclude the inclusion of other groups who had only some attributes or even one attribute in common with Bla brang, whether Dge lugs pa or not. Needham, quoting from biology, wrote that "no property is necessarily possessed by all individuals in the group, and no organism necessarily has all the properties generally characteristic of members of its group." Moreover, "a group can be related to two different groups that are not related to each other" (Needham 1975: 356). The biological and here social/political groups sometimes included individuals with strikingly different features.

Thus, in terms of both religious doctrines and political authority in supporting communities, the Bla brang Sngags pas and the Rnga ba tsho drug community are related to Dge lugs pa Bla brang, but the Sngags pas and Rnga ba tsho drug are not related. And the Kang rgan and Kang gsar Mgo logs and Dngul rwa are related to Bla brang, but the Mgo logs are not related to Dngul rwa. After Needham, no single feature is essential for inclusion in the Bla brang community; the Mgo log relationship need not be based on the same criteria as the Dngul rwa. Still, in the face of this religious and political diversity, Needham goes on to argue that in a polythetic society, members, even if very different must share some common attributes. Bla brang's communities were under the umbrella of the monastery's authority.

In terms of religion, Bla brang's community-at-large is often described as a Dge lugs pa community, but it includes the lineage of the female lama A lags Gung ru tshang in Rgan kya, a Rnying ma nunnery, the Tibetan and Chinese A mye gnyan chen Temple (1890) and nearby pilgrimage site, the Rnyingma Sngags pa College (1887), the Xiahe Mosque (1854), the Rgan kya Bon Temple, to name a few very thriving Bla brang institutions. In good polythetic style, Bla brang's Second 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa was an expert in standard Dge lugs pa religion, but he was also expert in engaging the remarkable range of local deities. Given these considerations, we might reconsider what the "Dge lugs pa" label means in this context.

All members of Bla brang's society, Dge lugs pa monks, Sngags pas, Bon, and the rest accepted the religious and political authority of the 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pas, even if for different reasons. Moreover, Bla brang's numerous branch monasteries, even if called "Dge lugs pa" might have resembled Bla brang only in name, or for reasons peripheral to what is often regarded as a Dge lugs pa monastery. Many did not hold extensive libraries or engage in high level academic discourse. These different communities were nonetheless under the authority of the Bla brang social and political institution.

Political Structures in Nomad Groups

A mdo nomad and monastery-owned communities like Bla brang's, Reb kong's, and on a smaller scale, Sde khri's had recognizable political systems with laws, rulers, and subjects under the authority of an aristocratic and monastic social structure. Owners of property exercised institutionalized rights over both resources and people. Nomad lords and monastic estate owners variously implemented taxes, corvée, and conscription. Lords and lamas implemented political authority or their "collective sovereignty," built on what Samuel has called "ideological-cultural cohesion" (Samuel, 1982). Recent scholars of Mongolian nomadic cultures have postulated that this "collective sovereignty" can be understood as a type of Mongol nomadic "state" structure. This theory is useful here, albeit on a dynamic borderland location, with a complex cultural matrix.

In this diverse polythetic borderlands environment Bla brang's umbrella of authority extended over its territories, its *lha sde*, where branch monasteries and lands were understood as properties of the main monastery. The major monastery communities are often rightly understood as "non-state ethnic groups," or "tribal" societies (Atwood, 2006: 210n2; Di Cosmo,

2006: 245n2, 245–246; Barfield, 2010.), which coalesced into recognizable units that evolved and were strengthened over time. Similarly, writing of Mongolia, Sneath, DiCosmo, Humphrey, Hürelbaatar, Bold, and others propose a model of a nomadic state, one not centralized but nonetheless complex, with hierarchies, and internal structures, a state not limited by nomadic mobility. Humphrey and Hürelbaatar argue that a better definition for at least the Mongol nomadic state is the Mongol term *törü*, drawing from Turkic states, meaning "a collection of customary norms," denoting in early Mongolia "high principle, high law, custom," and the Buddhist term *dharma*, and later simply "government" (Humphrey & Hürelbaatar, 2006: 265–293).

This model for a nomadic state does not follow Marxist or other Western models for statehood, nor is it explained by the theory of invariable patrilineal descent groups that gradually segment into increasingly complex alliances and statehood. From these perspectives "non-state" nomadic societies were erroneously thought to have simple governing organization, with no divisions of rank, status, or wealth (Sneath, 2007: 230), as Sneath criticizes, in "a kind of environmental determinism with a sort of political utilitarianism" (Sneath 2006: 1–22). That is, the descriptive term "pastoral nomadism" is a romanticized and inaccurate generalization.

These theories are useful for understanding A mdo, at least provisionally. In A mdo, there were numerous major monastic authorities like Bla brang, Rong bo, and others. However, outside of formal religious recognition and extensive religious networking there was little cross border political unity between monasteries, so much so that the grouped nomadic estates under the control of the monasteries might be understood as acephalous, "headless," with no consistent, universal and centralized hierarchies across their respective borders.

Still, authority, or the relationship between people and authority figures, as was the case in Bla brang, Sneath argues, is the key to state control. A state is therefore a relational unit. Writing of the Oirat Mongols in 1640, including Gushri Khan, Sneath noted that

> it had laws, rulers and subjects, but it was to have no capital, no centre and no sovereign. It was a distributed, headless state formed by independent nobles and their subjects, which shared a common law code and aristocratic social order (Sneath, 2006: 236).

Sneath continues that this was not an empire, and not centralized; it was not even a contiguous territory. Still, like Bla brang and A mdo, the Mongols had "codified law, a hierarchy of political offices, stratification, and

property in the form of institutionalized rights over both resources and people" (Sneath, 2006: 236). There were moreover strata of nobles who implemented taxes, conscription, and detailed laws. There was "collective sovereignty." Writing of the Mongols Christopher Atwood lists Mongol nomadic bureaucratic structures that mirror those in Bla brang and greater A mdo—which possessed many Mongol groups. These include the ruler and his inner circle, territorial and administrative structures, the roles of marriage alliances, law, religion, and others (Atwood, 2006: 207–243). These structures were again described as "social relations of obligation," in which community structures are built on kinship and kinship-like, non-kin "ritualized" family relationships (Sneath, 1999: 141–142). In light of these considerations we might understand Bla brang as one of A mdo's political groups, built of smaller units like the Sde khri and some thirty-two other estates, all in ways similar to Reb kong and other parts of A mdo.

Governance at Bla brang: Political and Social Structures in A mdo

In his 1947 publication the Chinese envoy Ma Wuji described the operation of the Bla brang government as ineffective, and in his view a "joke" (Ch. *xiao hua*). Ma Wuji based his judgment on, in his own words, the fact that nomadic society had no clear boundaries and the nomads' affairs were governed by local lords and monasteries (Ma, 1947: 10–11). Ma Wuji's opinions reflect Manchu-derived, Chinese Marxist-materialist, and Western perspectives (Bold, 2001: xv, 1–24).

However, there were three main political structures in A mdo and at Bla brang: first, the networks of internal monastic officials, in which power shifted between various offices (treasurer *phyag mdzod*, attendant *gnyer ba*, Throne Holder *khri pa*, etc.), depending on alliances, wealth, and personality; second, the nomadic lords, leaders of *tsho ba* and *shog pa* groups, their attendants and officers, for example the lord (*dpon po*), the tent leader (*gur gang ba*), and several others; third, the monastic representatives (*'go ba*), administrators (*sku tshab*), and their officers. Together, and in different configurations these three made up the governing infrastructure of A mdo communities (Nietupski, 2011: 54–64).

In general, Inner Asian nomad groups, and here A mdo groups were often controlled by these types of "large, organisational forms." There were small scale groups, but these also conformed to larger scale norms. Humphrey argues that these included Buddhist monasteries, like Bla

brang, which controlled, albeit loosely large regions with many subdivisions. In Mongol groups there were hierarchies much like those in A mdo monastery-controlled estates (Humphrey, 1999: 69). Interestingly, also as in Bla brang and greater A mdo, in large Mongol estates a distinction was made between the properties of the monastery as a corporate unit and the individual lamas. Humphrey remarked that

> [t]he leader's role was highly important in these institutions and, like other ideas of social status, was generally regarded as legitimate by the ordinary people: it was seen as ordained in the nature of things (by divine incarnation, by inheritance, etc.) (Humphrey, 1999: 69).

The remarkable thing about these monastic offices is not the fact that they existed, but rather the kind of networking that went on between teachers and disciples over lifetimes. New rebirths were tutored by old preceptors, and when the old preceptors passed, they were replaced by the new, often increasingly complex networks. This process resulted in a kind of infrastructure, clear in the Sde khri lineage, in which the First 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa's two primary officers were his primary students, Sde khri and Bse tshang. Sde khri, the Third Throne Holder of Bla brang, and Bse tshang, the Second went on to engage other teachers and students, who in their turn engaged still others in an expanding network. The monastery-based networks were however regulated by lineages of reborn lamas, which served to protect the estates' properties and regional authority.

Nomadic governance is not as well documented as internal monastic offices. The very idea of governance in nomad communities has been unthinkable to some observers. Zhang Dingyang, a Lanzhou official appointed by the warlord Feng Yuxiang (1882–1948), who in retrospect did indeed work for Bla brang's best interest, opens his 1928 report on Bla brang with a popular description of the evolution of (Chinese) civilization, which

> ... begins with the transformation of barren grasslands into agricultural land. This was always the case when our Xia ancestors changed barbarians into civilized people ... Bla brang is on the edge of Chinese civilization, and needs to be developed ... (Zhang, 1928: 4).

This represents a misperception of alternative, non-agrarian civilizations.

There were individual social-political units in A mdo nomad communities called *shog pa, tsho ba*, and *khyim tshang*, similar to Mongolian nomadic social groups, not necessarily or partly based on kinship, instead a general relatedness (Sneath, 1999). The nomad officers, the lord, the tent

leaders, the militia leaders, the water officers, and their assembled groups were not random. They were selected by the group and had to perform their duties; it was a functioning and consistent bureaucratic structure (Luo, 1990: 107–112), a system displaced because of political and subsequent social change.

The third type of governance in the monastery's properties was in the hands of the monastery-appointed representatives (*'go ba*) and their retinue of attendants and locally designated officers. Bla brang's representatives to nomad and semi-nomad places usually travelled with a scripture reader, a servant, a cook, and other attendants, often an entourage of six persons (Interviews, Xiahe County, 2004).

A mdo was in Sneath's words, a "property regime," with

> one of the most fundamental relations of historical pastoralism, and allowed those who owned livestock—in A mdo very often monastic institutions and individuals—to have them herded by others while retaining ownership and receiving a large part of their produce. The herding family retained a proportion of the animal produce and sometimes some of the offspring. (Sneath, 2007: 238).

This was one of the key sources of revenue in A mdo's—including Sde khri's—monastic and nomadic culture. Supervision and collection of revenues, and maintaining monastery authority were key duties of the monastic representatives.

The Mongol system is better known than that of the A mdo Tibetans, and serves as a basis for comparison. Mongol administrative units known as the *khoshuu* or "banners" (literally "one thousand horsemen") (Boldbaatar and Sneath, 2006: 302; 295–315; Tuttle, 2011) and *sum* (literally "arrow", Tib., *mda' tshan*) were ruled by hereditary lords affiliated with Buddhist monasteries and often operated as small political economies in their own right. Pastoral families generally moved to different seasonal pastures with their livestock in annual cycles, and land use was regulated by local officials. In most *khoshuu*s large numbers of animals were owned by the nobles or monasteries, and herded for them by their subjects. Most common subjects also had their own livestock, and the wealthier families sometimes had so many that they 'placed herds' themselves with other households. The poorest pastoralists had few animals or none at all and had to work for wealthier families to make a living (Sneath, 2007: 238–239; Nietupski, 2011). Mongol and A mdo Tibetan societies went on to develop different systems of sedentary responsibility under the Manchus and the Soviet Union, and in A mdo under the Chinese.

Case Study: The Sde khri Estate

The seat of Bla brang's Sde khri Estate is located at Bla brang Monastery, and the revenue-generating properties, the actual communities (*lha sde*), were located in and around modern Shis tshang, near Klu chu in today's southern Gansu Province. The Sde khri Estate however did not grow out of a vacuum.

Briefly, the Imperial Tibetan kings established garrisons (*sgar*) in A mdo including in the future Sde khri Estate, leaving resident troops who maintained control of the territory. When the Tibetan empire collapsed in about 850 CE, the disconnected garrisons remained in A mdo. When the Mongols and through them the Sa skya leaders, notably Chos rgyal 'phags pa, took control, local groups were either assigned a Mongol leader or local lords given a Mongol title, and local monasteries and communities converted to Sa skya Tibetan Buddhism. Community revenues were funneled to the new local authority and purposes. In later years the Ming and Qing central governments identified and classified A mdo groups, and recognized prominent local leaders. Even if often in error, and not at all uniformly, the consistent pressure of the outside authorities gradually resulted in the redefinitions of regional, especially borderlands authorities ('Brug thar & Sangs rgyas tshe ring, 2005: 21–31).

The diffuse data on the early history of the pre-Sde khri Estate region records contacts with various A mdo and cross border groups, including A mdo Reb kong, the Mongols, Manchus, and Chinese. By the time of the formation of the current Sde khri Estate under the Bla brang authorities there were some twelve nomadic and semi-nomadic *tsho ba* with traces of several garrisons (*sgar*) identified as from Imperial Tibet, the remains of Sa skya monasteries and temples, a broad distribution of alliances with neighboring Tibetan groups, and evidence of contacts with Khoshud Mongols, Manchus, and Chinese ('Brug thar, 2002: 85–97, 144, 247–253).

In 1840 the twelve local communities ('Brug thar, 2002: 247–249) pledged revenues from livestock management, land use, corvée, and militia service to Sde khri, an event that marked the founding of New Shis tshang Monastery (Cha ris skal bzang thogs med, 1995: 240). The first Throne Holder was a Reb kong native, the Third 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa. In 1877, on his return from China, the sixty-eight year old Third Sde khri, also a Reb kong native, became the second Throne Holder of the monastery. Dbal mang Pandita, from nearby Sang khog, became the third, followed to modern times by

other local A mdo scholars and teachers.[4] In the 1840s Sde khri started much new construction at New Shis tshang Monastery. This community became the primary source of revenues for the Sde khri Estate.

A Lags Sde khri Tshang, One Enlightened Bodhisattva in Eight Bodies

The primary authority in the Sde khri Estate, a key part of the larger Bla brang community is the lineage of Sde khri lamas. Their story illustrates the building blocks of A mdo governance. The sequence (*bla brgyud*) of the eight reborn Sde khri lamas (Bstan pa bstan ’dzin, 2003: 1–22; Dbal mang dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, 1987; 309–345; Gung thang bstan pa’i sgron me, n.d.: 1–18; Thur ma tshang, ca. 2002: 67–80) began with the Mongol Sde khri blo bzang don grub (1673–1746), who was born in Khri ka (Ch. Guide), in modern Qinghai Province. At age six he entered the predominantly Mongol-sponsored Lamo bde chen Monastery, and in 1689 at age sixteen entered Sgo mang College in Lhasa. He demonstrated a special ability for excellence in Buddhist scholarship and tantric ritual. He is said to have had a prodigious memory.

He rose to prominence in Lhasa and in 1701, at age twenty-eight, served as Treasurer (*phyag mdzod*) of Sgo mang and in 1706 as the Sgo mang Disciplinarian (*dge skos*) and General Manager (*gnyer ba*) under the First ’Jam dbyangs bzhad pa, then Throne Holder of ’Bras spung. Sde khri was

4 See the list of Throne Holders in Cha ris skal bzang thogs med. *Chos sde chen po shis tshang dgon gsar*, 208–496. Though prior to the founding of the New Shitsang Monastery, a good example of local political institution building in the Sde khri community is in the history of the Ma nge group in Mdzod dge stod and the career of Rtse dbus pa ’Jam dbyangs bshes gnyan (1769–1828), recorded by the Third Sde khri. In 1776 he was identified as the rebirth of the previous Rtse dbus pa, Grags pa bzang po, which brought with it the inheritance of all of the material possessions and revenue-generating properties of the previous birth. The text reports that when the young lama arrived at Ma nge he was greeted by local nomad district leaders and the local monastic community. At age nineteen, in 1788, he was ordained by the Second ’Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (1728–1791). In 1794 at age twenty-six he travelled to Lhasa; on return to his homeland he financed the building of a temple and a monastery. The Third ’Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (1792–1855) and the Third Gung thang, Gung thang dkon mchog bstan pa’i sgron me dpal bzang po (1762–1823) were among his main teachers, but his primary mentor was the Third Sde khri ’Jam dbyangs thub bstan nyi ma, (1779–1862). He wrote one volume of scripture commentaries, poems, and monastic regulations. The Third Sde khri wrote a biography of Rtse dbus pa titled *Rin chen phreng mdzes*. See Ye shes rdo rje. “Gangs can mkhas dbang rim byon gyi rnam thar mdor bsdus bdud rtsi’i thigs phreng,” (deb gnyis pa). In *Gangs can mkhas dbang rim byon gyi rnam thar mdor bsdus*, 2: 286–288. Beijing: Krung go’i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1996–2000.

highly regarded as a religious figure, and composed manuals on difficult points in Buddhist scriptures. In 1707, at age thirty-four he had developed close relationships with his mentor the First 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa, the Regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, the Sixth Dalai Lama Tshang dbyangs rgya mtsho, and the Mongol ruler Lazang Khan. Lhasa politics were in turmoil in those years; the Sixth Dalai Lama left his office, the Regent was executed by Lazang, and Manchu-Mongol relations were volatile. The First Sde khri was clearly in close proximity to major political events.

While the First 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa was in Lhasa three of his closest disciples were Bse tshang ngag dbang bkra shis (1678–1738), Sde khri blo bzang don grub (1673–1746), and Gung thang dge 'dun phun tshogs (1648–1724). When the sixty-one year old 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa accepted the offer of a new monastery at Bla brang in 1709, the First Gung thang, one of the highly respected A mdo scholars was sixty-one, Sde khri was thirty-six, and Bse tshang was thirty-one. In 1709 Gung thang temporarily stayed behind in Lhasa, and the three others took their diplomatic skills and high-level religious and intellectual knowledge not to a foreign environment, but home to their A mdo families and communities. Sde khri joined the 1709 entourage that went with the First 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa to their shared home in A mdo and was appointed Treasurer at Bla brang. These close relationships illustrate the type of networking that resulted in community authority and political infrastructures.

Sde khri's importance at Bla brang is signaled by the conflict over the succession of the First 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa. After the death of the First 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa in 1721, the lama's two closest disciples disagreed about the succession. Bse tshang and his supporters argued that the successor was the son of the Mongol king (d. 1735), Dga' ldan bsam grub, but Sde khri and his supporters, among them the wife of the Mongol King, Rnam rgyal sgrol ma, argued that the rebirth was Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po (1728–1791), born in Sngang ra, Qinghai. In 1738 Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po was named as the rebirth, but the controversy had far-reaching implications, a regional religious and political schism between Gtsos, Bse tshang, the Gnam lha communities, and others. These power struggles, even if not fully resolved, demonstrate the exercise of local political authority by monastic leaders.

When the First 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa died in 1721, Bse tshang was the Bla brang Throne Holder and Sde khri the Treasurer. When Bse tshang died in 1738, Sde khri became the Bla brang Throne Holder, and the way was clear for his and the Mongol Queen's candidate to be authenticated

and enthroned. Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po was thus authenticated first by Sde khri in 1738 at age ten, and later by Lhasa authorities in 1740, when he was twelve years old.

Meanwhile, the Second Bse tshang was born in 1739 into a powerful local family. He was authenticated as Bse tshang's rebirth by the elderly Sde khri in 1746, who died that same year. With Sde khri gone and Bse tshang still very young, the disagreement about the succession of 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa festered (Nietupski, 2011: 125–127).

Sde khri's life was immersed in religion and politics. His biographies include stories of his rise to prominence in Lhasa and of his managing disputes in A mdo, in one explicit example, between Chinese, Mongols, and Tibetans (Dbal mang dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, 1987: 323). In response to a complaint about land use presented to Sde khri at Bla brang by some Qinghai Chinese lords led by the Rgan kya Pandita, Sde khri noted that Bla brang's properties were donated by the Mongol Prince, and that many new monasteries were built in Qinghai supporters' territories. The Chinese lords' dispute was defused and they angrily acquiesced. This was an instance of an ethnically Mongol, Lhasa educated Bla brang Monastery monk and political officer mediating a dispute between Qinghai and Gansu Chinese, Mongols, and Tibetans. The story displays A mdo's pluralism and its reliance on monastic authority.

The Second Sde khri, 'Jigs med lung rigs rgya mtsho (1748–1778) was not a prolific scholar, but by all indications was a prominent political figure. He was born in a Reb kong Mongol nomad family, sent to Bla brang at age thirteen, and rose to serve as the Sixteenth Throne Holder of Bla brang. At age twenty-one he went to study at Sgo mang in Lhasa, was recognized and titled by the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama, and passed away at age thirty-one.

The ethnically Mongol Third Sde khri 'jam dbyangs thub bstan nyi ma (1779–1862) was born in Rtse khog, not far from Reb kong. In 1785 he was granted novice vows and beginning at age nine, received tantric teachings from the Second 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (1728–1791). He entered Bla brang's main college, Thos bsam gling in 1790. In later years he was a disciple of the Third 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (1792–1855). His first teachers were from Dpa' ris ('Jigs med dam chos), Rkang tsha, and elsewhere in A mdo. At age fourteen he was ordained by Gung thang dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me (1762–1823) and in the coming years he went on to study philosophy and tantric ritual intensively under Gung thang. In his late teens Sde khri visited Wutaishan and studied there. By age twenty-four he was offered the highest Dge bshes degree (*rdo rams pa*) at Bla brang,

but because of illness declined the honor. At age twenty-seven he became Throne Holder at Tsha rgwan be shing Monastery in Rma chu, for two years. At age thirty, after the invitation from A ru hor chen he travelled to Beijing, Mongolia, and again to Wutaishan. At Wutaishan he engaged his hosts, visited the prominent shrines there, and had audiences with the prominent teachers of the day in residence at Wutaishan, including Klong brdol and the Fourth Lcang skya.

At age forty-six he became the Thirtieth Throne Holder at Bla brang. At forty-eight he made another trip to Mongolia, where he sponsored the construction of and consecrated a Hevajra College, using Mongolian language in the liturgy. He returned to Bla brang at age forty-nine, and in 1837, at age fifty-eight went on to Rong bo Monastery in Reb kong to give an extensive series of Kālacakra teachings. Shortly thereafter, at age sixty-two, he went to Chu bzang Monastery and again with Lcang skya hutukhtu gave Kālacakra teachings to that predominantly Mongol community. At age sixty-two he made a long trip to Wutaishan and then Beijing, to the Yonghe Temple, where he and several hosts, among them the Lcang skya lama and the Rgya nag pa, engaged in Kālacakra studies and rituals. He was privileged with a close relationship with the Manchu court and remained active in Beijing until age sixty-eight (1847).

As a sign of his prominence in A mdo, in 1858, in the office of the Third ’Jam dbyangs bzhad pa, the Third Sde khri was granted the title of “Golden Throne Holder,” following Gung thang I (1648–1724), Hor tshang I (d. 1729), and Zam tsha I (1690–1750). The latter three, Gung thang, Hor tshang, and Zam tsha, were given the title during the first birth of their lineages. They had served as the Dga’ ldan khri pa in Lhasa, a mark of Lhasa’s authority in A mdo. Sde khri was given the title of the fourth Bla brang “Golden Throne Holder,” even though he had not served as Dga’ ldan khri pa in Lhasa, signaling an assertion of authority in politics and religion in A mdo (Yon tan rgya mtsho, 1987: 121–220; Dan Qu, 1994: 85–128).

The Third Sde khri passed away at age eighty-four. He was a scholar, tutored by many of the great minds of the day. He composed eight volumes of works on philosophy, ritual, and the arts. He affected the lives of many students and local leaders. The long list of his disciples includes the Fourth and Fifth Lcang skya, the Chu bzang hutukhtu, the Thu’u bkwan lama, A kya hutukhtu, Stong ’khor hutukhtu, three of Lhasa’s Dga’ ldan Throne Holders, the Fourth Zam tsha, and the Zhabs dkar lama, among others. This sample of the available data shows that he was fully engaged in local cross border institutions from an early age, that he was a prominent religious figure deeply involved in politics, and that he was educated to the highest standards of the day, fully in A mdo.

The Fourth Sde Khri (1862–1874) was born in a Co ne Tibetan nomad family; he visited Wutaishan at age ten, and passed away in Mongolia. The Fifth Sde khri (1874–1898) was born into the same Co ne Tibetan nomad family as the Fourth Sde khri (Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, 2003: 19). He was ordained by the Fourth 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa and produced one volume of writings. He was enthroned at Bla brang, but maintained close connections to Mongol groups. At age twenty-five he passed away in Mongolia. The connections between the Co ne/Shis tshang region and Mongolia were maintained in this period. The Sixth Sde khri (1898–1939) was born in a Reb kong Mongol family. His main teachers included the Fourth 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa, Gung thang, and Dbal mang lamas. At age nineteen he took the thrones of Shis tshang and Dngul rwa. He went on to serve as the Eightieth Throne Holder of Bla brang at age thirty-seven, was ordained together with the Fifth 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa at thirty-nine by the Panchen Lama Chos kyi nyi ma, and passed away at age forty-two (Rgya zhabs drung tshang skal bzang dkon mchog rgya mtsho, 1998: 406). The Seventh Sde khri (1939–1944) was from Klu chu, near Shis tshang. He was ordained by the Fifth 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa. The Eighth Sde khri (b. 1944) is from Sichuan Mdzod dge, not far from Shis tshang. He was identified by traditional methods by the Thu'u bkwan lama at age six. Today he serves as a functionary in the Gansu government, as the Associate Director of the Southern Gansu People's Government, and as Associate Chairman of the Gansu Province Youth Association. This case study illustrates the exercise and continuity of A mdo's political infrastructures.

Conclusions

A mdo was not a place of anarchy, inhabited by uncivilized bandits, where the regional states and civilizations were not governed. When the First 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa, Sde khri, and their entourage left Lhasa for their homelands at the invitation of the Khoshud Mongols in 1709, A mdo was not an empty wilderness, but a region with a distinctive political and religious heritage. There was clearly a relationship between central Tibet and A mdo, and there were assumptions of political authority imported from central Tibet. Subject groups accepted the authority of monastic leaders, but group affiliations could and did change, between different monastic authorities and over time.

Tibetan A mdo is "transnational and trans-regional . . . and links neighboring polities together" (Michaud, 2010: 187–214). A mdo mirrored central Tibetan state power structures; it was not anarchistic or unsophisticated,

and its many leading scholars were intellectually vibrant. Indeed, while several important A mdo Tibetan and Mongol scholars were Lhasa-educated, others, for example the Third Sde Khri and Dbal mang Pandita, never studied in Lhasa. The remote A mdo borderland was a center of culture, religiously Tibetan Buddhist, politically structured, and economically sustainable.

The Mongols are a good example of an outside culture that became assimilated into A mdo Tibetan culture and economy. The Mongols however maintained their sense of community and exercised political power and religious expression in A mdo. For them, A mdo was a true place of "convergence." A mdo was a borderland where neighboring groups were assimilated and sometimes played major social and political roles, muted in recent history but alive in local communities.

Not all outside groups were assimilated. With exceptions of Xining and other pockets or outposts, the Manchus and Republican Chinese did not assimilate into A mdo culture to the extent of the Mongols. Their presence was nonetheless significant. The eighteenth and nineteenth century Manchus and Chinese adopted a "packaged" or missionary version of Tibetan Buddhism and religion often via A mdo (e.g. the Rgya nag pa Tibetan lamas), and established economic (wool, tea, hides, horses, silk, etc.) and political ties with individual monastic leaders. This much is nonetheless significant, as it marks centralized Manchu and Chinese governments engaging decentralized monastic authorities.

The A mdo Muslims were a powerful presence, assimilated in pockets, accepted and rejected over time. In the eighteenth and especially the nineteenth centuries they developed an increasing economic presence in A mdo, followed by Muslim religious institutions. However, while economically and often linguistically included in A mdo, they remained excluded from mainstream A mdo Buddhist religious society.

A mdo is on a vibrant borderland, and asserted its identity at the same time as absorbing and integrating non-Tibetan cultures, in a "polythetic" model. The "polythetic" model however works best when in close proximity to the actual borders. In more remote Tibetan highland locations outside influences were less evident.

A mdo did indeed have a culturally and environmentally specific, monastery centered and nomadic supported governance. It was not a "state" on the model of other Asian and European countries, but it did have a functioning political system and authority structures. Bla brang Monastery had some thirty-two major estate seats, and each held and managed properties around eastern A mdo. Local lords managed the functions of

their communities, often with resident monastery representatives. Like all thirty-two estates the seat of the Sde khri Estate was at Bla brang, and its primary income generating properties in and around Shis tshang. Local lords worked with monastery representatives to insure proper accounting and exercise of political authority.

Latter day A mdo politics were built on Imperial Tibetan foundations, in a unique nomadic, highlands environment. As time went on the A mdo borderland peoples engaged their neighbors for trade and cultural exchange. As a matter of convenience and for their advantage nomad groups often engaged their neighbors, who for their part recorded those engagements and authority structures on their own terms and in their own languages. The remarkable pluralism in borderland A mdo, and the historical expressions in Mongol, Manchu, and Chinese however do not preclude the fact of the exercise of Tibetan A mdo government and social functions.

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RNYING MA PA AND BON TANTRIC COMMUNITIES

RIG ’DZIN DPAL LDAN BKRA SHIS (1688–1743); THE ‘1900 DAGGER-WIELDING, WHITE-ROBED, LONG-HAIRED YOGINS’ (SNGAG MANG PHUR THOG GOS DKAR LCANG LO CAN STONG DANG DGU BRGYA) & THE EIGHT PLACES OF PRACTICE OF REB KONG (REB KONG GI SGRUB GNAS BRGYAD)

Heather Stoddard

This brief preliminary study is a follow up of two recent well-documented articles by Yangdon Dhondup. The first, ‘Rebkong: Religion, History and Identity of a Sino-Tibetan Borderland Town’, gives a broad background history to the *sngags mang* community, tracing their origins back to the 8th century Tantric yogin, Padmsambhava (Dhondup, 2011). In the second article, ‘Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis (1688–1743) and the Emergence of a Community of Tantric Practitioners in Rebkong, Amdo (Qinghai)’ (Dhondup, 2013), Dhondup provides a detailed study on the life and times of the founder, and the role he played in re-establishing and re-structuring the community. She has also written a short introduction to the second founding father, Lcang lung dpal chen Nam kha’ ’jigs med (1757–1821/1769–1833), who lived around one century later (Dhondup, 2010b).

This chapter is a follow-up to her two articles in that it provides additional biographical annotations on the life of Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, as well as a summary of his writings as found in Volume I of the *Sngags mang dpe tshogs* series, ‘The Collected Writings of Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis’ (1688–1743), *Rig ’dzin chen po dpal ldan bkra shis kyi gsung rtsom phyogs bsgrigs*, Beijing, 2002. Volume 10 in the same series, ‘Collected Historical Sources on the Community of Reb kong Mantrins’, *Reb kong sngags mang gi lo rgyus phyogs bsgrig*s, Beijing 2004, is the richest in the series published to date, and an overview of the contents is also provided. A few examples of translated extracts from the founder’s autobiography and writings help to flesh out the person, with examples of his style and his somewhat raunchy, direct and challenging mode of expression. This research is also based upon seven field trips to Reb kong and the surrounding regions between 1986 and 2011. In Appendix 1, a brief presentation of the ‘Eight Great Practice Places’ of Reb kong will serve as a basis for

further study, while Appendix 2 provides a brief chronology of Dpal ldan bkra shis's life, and tables of the three main *sngags mang* lineages.[1]

Volume 1 (Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, 2002) presents nine texts of Dpal ldan bkra shis's writings, preceded by a 'Short Introduction to the Author' (*rtsom pa po'i ngo sprod mdor bsdus*), signed 'Sngags mang zhib 'jug khang' and dated October 2001, Xining.

Text 1 is divided into three sections.

1a. Autobiography: An Auspicious Necklace of Precious Stones (*Rang rnam rin po che'i do shal skal ldan mgul bai rgyan phreng*, pp. 1–24). This is the autobiography of the founder, written in 1742, just one year before he passed away, and as he (2002: 23) explains in the colophon: "It is thanks to repeated encouragements from many monks and yogins, long and short term students, to put down in book form my earlier collection of notes written in Khams and copied out here with the addition of other materials, in the year of the Male Water Dog (1742), at the age of fifty-five, so that it may be of use to a few fortunate ones with a similar karmic lot." The autobiography is short and concerns essentially Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis's ancestors, lamas, early life, travels in Central Tibet and Khams, and his activity as a teacher.

1b. 'A Song of Pride of the Powerful Hero on the Manner of Obtaining a Small Quantity of Initiations, Transmissions and Secondary Initiations' (*Dbang lung rjes gnang cung zad thob pa'i tshul gyi yi ge stobs chen dpa' bo'i 'gying glu*) includes both ordinary and exceptional teachings and focuses on Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis's life from the age of fifteen through to his twenties. The last phrase (2002: 26) confirms that 'of the two, New and Old (or Early), most of these were obtained in the manner of the New tradition' (*phel cher gsar ma'i phyogs kyi thob tshul lags*).

1c. 'A Great Divine Drum of Questions and Answers on How I Obtained Initiations, Transmissions and Instructions in the Early Transmission of the Vajrayana Vehicule' (*Snga 'gyur rdo rje theg pa'i phyogs su dbang lung khrid gsum ji ltar thob kyi dris lan lha'i rnga bo che zhes bya ba*).

[1] Thanks to Dorje Tsering Chenagtsang, Dr Nida Chenagtsang and Kyisar Ludup for help in translating several extracts of Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis' writings.

Text 2. ‘An Amazing Song of Rejoicing—A Flowing Current of Words on the Activity of the Lama who goes by the name of Rigdzin’ (*Bla ma rig ’dzin ming can gyi spyod tshul brjod pa’i gtam gyi rgyun ngo mtshar dgyes pa’i glu dbyangs*).[2]

This text presents a lengthy and sometimes heated discussion, in both verse and prose, on the two major Tibetan religious currents that Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis was familiar with, the Rnying ma or *sngags pa* householder tradition, and the Dge lugs pa monastic tradition. A strong plea against partisan violence and bigoted sectarianism runs right through the text, and indeed appears as a leitmotif throughout his writings, underlining the richness of the different traditions in Tibet, amongst which he sees no contradiction. As a starting point to the debate, he refers to satirical remarks made by some (Dge lugs pa) *dge bshes* who mock the Rnying ma pa yogins saying that it is untrue that Padmasambhava came to Tibet. This was written during the period when Dpal ldan bkra shis was spreading the Rnying ma teachings, based upon Padmasambhava’s tradition, throughout Reb kong and the surrounding region.

To nourish the debate he quotes widely and sometimes in jesting fashion sources that include basic Buddhist ethics and authorative Dge lugs pa masters, Tsong kha pa (1357–1419), the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mthso (1617–1682), Panchen Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1570–1662), Shar Skal ldan rgya mtsho (1607–1677), etc., who “showed no partiality” with regard to the different traditions in Tibet. He quotes *A History of the Dharma* by Bu ston rin chen grub (1290–1364), Mi la ras pa (1040–1123), ’Brug pa Kun legs (15th c.), and the popular trickster, A khu Ston pa, an anti-Rnying ma *yig cha*, or study manual, from the ’Bri gung bka’ brgyud tradition as well as various Rnying ma pa Treasure texts. There are short excursions on robes and hats, on debate in India and Tibet, and on the translation of Buddhism during the Early Diffusion, *snga dar*. At the same time details on more acrimonious local infighting, between the Dge lugs pa and Rnying ma pa, and amongst the Rnying ma pa yogins themselves are included, and it is widely held that these local disputes form a backdrop to Dpal ldan bkra shis’s untimely death.

This corpus was put together over a decade before he died and in the colophon the author writes (2002: 112–113): “In the year of the Iron Female

[2] See for example, pages 36–40, 45–46, 49–51, 54–57, 65–67, 72, 84–88, 91–95, 100, 104, 112–113.

Pig (1731), disturbed by numerous outer contradictions, I put down on paper all sorts of mad chatter, whatever appeared in my mind. Later on, two of my disciples, Shes rab can and Rgyal mtshan can, saw the materials and encouraged me to edit them into one text. So on the 13th day of the 4th month of the year of the Water Rat (1732), thinking that it would serve for the practice of the Dharma, as in the proverb, 'extracting good fortune from inauspicious signs', it was put together. May this, our tradition of the greatly secret Vajrayana, remain like a great river until the end of the eon."

Texts 3 & 4 contain over 200 pages of his collected Vajra Songs, (*Rig 'dzin Pad ma dgyes pa'i rdo rje'i gsung mgur ji snyed sems kyi 'char sgo ma 'gag sgyu mai rol rtsed* (pp. 119–197 & 198–276). These songs need to be explored in detail. No doubt further autobiographical materials will emerge, as well as a fuller picture of his philosophical and religious way of thinking.

Texts 5–9 contain various rituals that have not been explored by the present author. Only the titles are given here, out of which three appear to be propitiations of major Yidam deities. *Khro rgyal rta mchog rol bag sang sgrub kyi gtor bzlog bgegs dpung mthar byed* (pp. 277–317); *Dpal ldan mgon poi gtor ma'i cho ga* (pp. 318–321); *Skyes bu chen po'i phud skong nyung bsdus* (pp. 322–325); *Dpal ldan lha mo'i srog bsgrub dgra bgegs gsod pa'i spu gri* (pp. 326–334) and *Lab btsas brtsigs gsos dpangs bstod gsal sgron rgya mtsho* (pp. 335–340).

The above are tentative remarks based upon a rapid overview of the sources. These texts deserve a thorough study in order to gain a better understanding of the author and the founding of the Sngag mang community. In a broader context they will no doubt reveal more contemporaneous detail on the deep conflict, both sectarian and power-based, that forms the backdrop to the establishment and consolidation of the Dge lugs pa empire in Tibet, Central Asia and Manchu China, from the 16th through to the 18th centuries.

Volume 10 (Lce nag tshang Hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'Od zer sgrol ma, 2004) in the *Sngags mang dpe tshogs* series contains the largest corpus of texts and images from this tradition to be published in a single volume. The book begins with a splendid array of photos and images of numerous lineage masters and sites belonging to the tradition. This is followed by an introduction divided according to a distinctive *sngags mang* periodization of Tibetan history (pp. 1–17).

1) Early Diffusion of Tantric Buddhism, *bstan pa snga dar* (8th c.)
2) Later Diffusion, *bstan pa phyi dar* (i.e. 18th c.)
3) Renaissance, *bstan pa yang dar* (1976–2004)

Next comes a detailed table of contents in seven chapters. Chapters 1–6 are devoted to a presentation the Sngag mang centres. First of all come the ‘Eight Practice Places of Rebkong’ and the ‘Eight Knowledge Holders’, *Vidyadhara Mahāsiddha* (pp. 2–25).[3] This section is followed by listings and descriptions of approximately one hundred and eighteen *sngags khang* and other *sngags pa* practice centres located in the six prefectures or *rdzong* in Reb kong and the surrounding areas (pp. 26–673).[4] Chapter Seven, the last, is dedicated to ‘Old Historical Sources’ (*Lo rgyus dpe rnying*) and begins with a reprint of the autobiography of Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis (*Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis kyi rang rnam*, pp. 674–701), already published in Volume 1, and discussed in this article elsewhere. This is followed by a biography of the second founding father, Dpal chen nam mkha’ ’jigs med (pp. 702–742), as well as thirteen other autobiographies and biographies of leading figures. Lastly comes a second version of ‘A History of the Eight (or Ten) Practice Places of Reb kong’ (*Yul reb kong gi grub pa’i gnas brgyad sogs kyi lo rgyus bkod pa dvangs shel gyi ’khar ba*). It should be noted that there are some key discrepancies between this presentation and the other guide mentioned above (Appendix 1).[5]

The author’s interest in the *sngags mang* yogins of Reb kong has been developing particularly over the last few years in relation to the lives of A mdo Dge ’dun chos ’phel (1903–1951) and his father, A lags Rgyal po (ca 1865–1910), fourth (or fifth) holder of the line descending from Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis.[6] A lags Rgyal po occupied a central position in the community and yet he appears to have met with dissention at Rig ’dzin rab ’phel gling, the seat of the lineage, in the village of Rgyal po Chu ca, where Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis was born, and where the temple of Rgyal po Chu ca at Rig ’dzin rab ’phel gling still stands today.[7] Thus,

[3] See Appendix 1, for a list of the sites and their founders. There are some variables depending on the source.

[4] Reb kong rdzong (Ch. Tongren); Rtse khog; Gcan tsha; Ba yan; Mar nang Reb kong; Thun te (’Bal).

[5] Notably, on the identity of the founding fathers.

[6] See Vol. 1, introduction, 3, for a discussion of the uncertainties connected with the lineage, due to the prohibition of both the recognition of Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis’s reincarnation, and the publication of his works.

[7] Restoration being carried out by Dr Nida Chenagtsang, 2011–12.

according to the present day oral version of events, he was invited *in extremis* by the immediate reincarnation of Zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol (1781–1851) to move his residence to Zhabs dkar's hermitage at G.ya' ma bkra shis 'khyil, further to the north of the valley, above and behind Zho'ong spyis.

Today, the Reb kong *sngags mang* community must be the largest group of householder yogins in the Land of Snows, counting several thousand members, men, women and children, nomads and farmers, with their territory centred on the 'Golden Valley of Reb kong' (*Reb kong gser mo ljongs*). According to the famous 17th century Dge lugs pa yogin from the region, Shar Skal ldan rgya mtsho (1607–1677), who founded Rong bo dgon chen in 1630, their origins go back well over one thousand years to the mid-8th century when, as he writes, Padmasambhava came to visit the region. Indeed, he affirms that the above-mentioned Eight Tibetan Knowledge Holders, founders of the Eight Practice Places, go back to Guru Rinpoche's time or at least to the latter years of the Spu rgyal empire of Great Tibet (Lce nag tshang Hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'Od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 5–7).

As Dhondup has mentioned, several other 'practice places' in the surrounding region are closely linked to a further five emblematic personalities who played key roles at the end of the empire (Dhondup, 2013). Firstly, the 'Three Learned Men of Tibet' (*Bod kyi mkhas pa mi gsum*), Mar, Gtsang and G.yo who, according to early narrative sources,[8] fled from Central Tibet to escape an anti-Buddhist persecution launched by the last *btsan po* of the Spu rgyal line, U'i dum brtan (Glang dar ma, 815–842). This appears to have been the last of several persecutions under the empire, being launched not so much against Buddhism as a religion, but more as an attempt to counter the growing tendency of young men to enter Buddhist monasteries instead of going to war (Karmay, 2003: 57–68). When Mar, Gtsang and G.yo fled from their hermitage on Mt. Ri bo che near Lhasa, they carried the precious Buddhist *Vinaya* with them. First heading west, then north and east, they travelled all around the periphery of the Tibetan plateau, descending no doubt towards the end of their

[8] Numerous accounts can be found from the 12th century onwards, beginning with Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer (1024–1092), *Chos 'byung Me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud*, Lhasa 1988. See also Stoddard (2004) 'A Note on Royal Patronage in Tenth Century Tibet during the 'Rekindling of the Flame', for a detailed overview of the sources and the early sites in A mdo connected with these events, and with the present day *sngags mang* community.

journey into territories of non-Bodhic peoples, until they reached Dan thig, an impenetrable mountain fastness in the extreme north-east. Upon arriving there, they noted thankfully that they were back in a land “where Tibetan was the spoken language.” (Gos lo tsā ba gzhon nu dpal, 1985: 91–92 & Stoddard, 2004).

The fourth figure of this group is Lha lung dpal gyi rdo rje, U’i dum brtan’s presumed assassin, who according to legend, helped the fifth figure, Bla chen dgongs pa rab gsal (mid to end of 9th c.), get ordination as a Buddhist monk. He started life in that same region as a Bon po shepherd boy who went in search of the ‘Three Learned Men’, and who studied the *Vinaya Code of Discipline* at their feet, taking his monastic vows under their guidance before establishing his own retreat centre in a peaceful forest at Dan thig, where he lived for forty years at the head of a thriving monastic community (Stoddard, 2004: 53, 63 & 97). Although over seven hundred years separates these early, almost mythic personalities from the time of Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, both communities occupied many of the same sites throughout the region, thus creating a strong sense of identity and continuity right up to the present day.

The Life of Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis (1688–1742)

As mentioned above, it is fortunate that the short autobiography, *rang rnam*, of the founder of *sngags mang* as well as an important collection of his *mgur* songs have survived, for they provide an authentic individual voice. The following is only a sampling of his work that deserves a much closer reading in order to bring out the coherence of his anti-sectarian stance, and his voice as an outspoken master from north-east Tibet, living through critical times in the 18th century.

Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis was born in 1688 (Earth Dragon year) into the ancient Rlang family in the village of Rgyal po chu ca in Reb kong. There is some controversy about the exact year, for in his autobiography he (2002, 11) states that someone else declared that it was actually the year of the Earth Snake (1689). The significance of this small modification is not clear, even though it appears to have troubled him somewhat. Dhondup discusses the fact that even though he was born into a householder *sngags pa* family, he took basic *rab byung* vows as a monk at the age of thirteen, in 1701, and entered Rong bo thos bsam chos ’khor gling, the College of Philosophy of the main Dge lugs pa monastery of Reb kong,

founded by the renowned Dge lugs pa scholar-yogin, Skal ldan rgya mtsho, in 1630 (Dhondup, 2013: 10).[9]

There, Dpal ldan bkra shis followed the basic Dge lugs pa curriculum of studies in logic and philosophy, but it is clear that he did not limit himself to the textbooks. By the age of twenty three he wrote that he was 'pretending' to study philosophy according to the monastic rules, but he had begun deity visualisation of Mañjuśrī, Sarasvatī and Vajrabhairava (major *yi dam* deities of the Dge lugs pa tradition). He also received important initiations from Manipa Rinpoche, the yoga- or vajra-master (*rdo rje slob dpon*) of Rong bo, including the *Rdo rje phreng ba, Vajrāvali*; the 'Four Great Initiations' (*dbang chen bzhi*); and the 'One Hundred Sadhana' (*sgrub thabs brgya rtsa*). Then in 1712, at age twenty five, 'due to certain circumstances', he began to practice powerful rituals (*mngon spyod kyi las sgrub pa dang rlung 'khor kle*) and found that they suited him quite well (Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, 2002: 11). Furthermore everyone got to know about it.

This combination of the 'ancient' and 'new' traditions is not unusual in north-eastern Tibet where the martial tradition of the forefathers of the A mdo people lives on to this day, and where there is both active cooperation and violent competition between the two dominant traditions, the scholarly, analytical Dge lugs pa, and the meditative, magical Rnying ma pa.

A year later, in the Water Snake, 1713, like countless aspiring young monks from Eastern Tibet, he set out for Lhasa with a few companions. They travelled via Khams and on their way and 'due to necessity', he accomplished a rain-stopping ritual for the 'Eight Classes' of local spirits, *sde brgyad*, by the banks of the 'Bri chu River. The waters 'divided into two parts' (allowing his company to cross over) and as a result he wrote that he 'believed in himself, in the gods, and in the lamas'.

Arriving in Central Tibet, he and his A mdo friends visited the ancient monasteries of Byang rva sgreng, Stag lung etc., and on reaching Dga' ldan, in spite his feeling that it would be best to go straight back home, his monk friends persuaded him to stay. They continued on their detailed pilgrimage around the monasteries and holy 'supports' of the Buddhist teachings and, as he writes (Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, 2002: 12), 'it was especially when going to visit the throne of the seven-fold lineage of 'Jam dbyang gtsang pa [i.e. Tsong kha pa?], that a 'clear and vibrant inner faith

[9] The great Dge lugs pa monastic university of Bla brang bkra shis dkyil would be established just three or four years later.

was born’. Then again, when they arrived at Yer pa Lha ri snying po, on the way to the Ra sa ’phrul snang temple (Jo bo khang or Gtsug lag khang of Lhasa), he felt ‘unbounded joy’ and wanted to stay right where he was. But he went on to complete the pilgrimage with his companions, visiting the two main Jo bo statues in the Jokhang and Ramoche temples, the ‘Five Spontaneous Images’, and the Potala on the Red Hill. Yet again he wanted to return home, but a good monk friend from ’Bras spung dissuaded him and so finally,

> ‘In accordance with my place of origin, I entered the path of discipline at Bkra shis sgo mang College in ’Bras spung. There, although in a general way I studied philosophy for four or five years [listening and reflecting, *thos bsam*], it was only on the surface. Perhaps it was like the saying, “Ancient karmic imprints and the writing on scrolls”, in that I wanted to gain some realisation, not just understanding on paper. Or was it thanks, perchance, *not* to the gods, but to the likes of the *rgyal gong* demons that were making my mind wander![10] Were they delivering a prophecy? In any case, by that time I was unceasingly motivated by the desire to do nothing else but practice. Thus once again I set out on a pilgrimage with a few harmonious Dharma friends to visit the holy sites of Central Tibet. On the way to Gtsang, to see the Panchen Lama in Bkra shis lhun po, we visited Zha lu, Snar thang, Khro phu, Rtag brtan (Jo nang phun tshogs gling) etc., and upon returning to Dbus, we went around the three main seats of the Dge lugs pa, Se ra, ’Bras spung and Dga’ ldan, before visiting all the major Rnying ma pa centres, in Lha sa, Bsam yas, Yang rdzong, Rdo rje brag, Smin grol gling and Mchims phu, etc., proceeding almost everywhere by making full-length body prostrations’ (Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, 2002: 12).

At this point, Dpal ldan bkra shis murmurs discontent and not only between the lines. He complains about the unwelcome advice he gets on his return to Dbus from the principal of his College Residence (*khams mtshan dge rgan*) and some apparently kindly fellow monks who chat to him in an intimate way, telling him that going on pilgrimage and taking initiations and listening to Dharma teachings, creates obstacles. They tell him that especially while studying the Manual of Dialectics (*mtshan nyid kyi yig cha*), it is ‘inappropriate’, or even ‘not allowed’ (*lta mi rung*) to read books on the *Byang chub lam rim*, i.e. ‘The Gradual Path to Enlighenment’ (by Tsong kha pa), or on *Blo sbyong*, ‘Mind Training’. They say that since ‘these give rise to the concept of impermanence they may make one impatient with study’. Not only that, they continue their argument, ‘if you read

[10] ‘Demons’, not ‘gods’ were helping, so a bit of realisation was needed, not just words on paper.

books on the subject of Mantrayāna you will understand that there is a rapid path and you will abandon the diligent study of Sūtrayāna' . . . 'Being on the receiving end of a lot more of this type of un-analytic, garbled speech, I concluded that if I would have prescience and could know just how many years I had to live, I might be able to determine how many years I could spend studying dialectics before going on to Mantrayāna, to relying on a lama, asking for initiations and listening to the Dharma teachings, and then after that to go on to do practice' (Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, 2002: 12).

Here, Dpal ldan bkra shis (2002: 13) reinforces his position by declaring that 'the actions of previous Buddhas, and the practices of the bodhisattvas are 'uncertain', *ma nges pa* (i.e. they do not follow a pre-determined order or path). To support his argument he quotes the great scholar-yogin Tsong kha pa, writing of his spiritual journey, which can hardly be said to have followed a linear, step-by-step approach to the study, practice and assimilation of the Buddhist teachings.

> 'In the first place, I sought to listen [*thos pa*] to as many teachings of the great Victorious Ones as possible. In the middle, I allowed all authorative texts to arise as instruction [*gzhungs lugs thams cad gdams pa shar*] and in the end I practiced constantly, day and night, dedicating all to the spread of the teachings. Reflecting on this way of proceeding, the future is excellent! How very kind, O Venerable Treasure of Knowledge!'[11]

In spite of what appears to be a certain logical orderliness in the process outlined above by Tsong kha pa, it does not follow the same one found in the latter-day Dge lugs pa curriculum, as proposed by Dpal ldan bkra shis's orthodox co-disciples. He remarks that the quote is right on target with regard to his argument about uncertainty in the order of spiritual progress because, from around seven years of age, Tsong kha pa began to follow with success, the 'many prophetic enunciations he received 'from the Glorious Lord of Secrets,[12] from Venerable Mañjuśrī, *rje btsun* 'Jam dpal dbyangs, and many other tutelary deities who kept on telling me, 'Do this and do that!'

However, as Dpal ldan bkra shis remarks, 'to follow such a path to Liberation is almost impossible especially for the likes of us ordinary beings with little accumulation of merit, for we can only accomplish immediate tasks with immediate means. Some of the larger perspectives (i.e. working

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11 Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of Wisdom, is Tsong kha pa's tutelary deity.
12 *Dpal gsang ba'i bdag po* (*Skt.Guhyapati or Vajrapāṇi*).

for the benefit of others, *gzhan don*) often do not reach full maturity and thus the thought arises, ‘If only it will be possible to accomplish the essential for myself!’ (and yet keep in accordance with the way of Tsong kha pa and the great masters).

Around that time, while pondering this crucial question Dpal ldan bkra shis catches smallpox (Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, 2002: 13), *sib bu’i nad*, and once again feels downcast at the behaviour of certain monks, suggesting no doubt a tendency to extreme orthodoxy that had come to the fore in some monastic circles during the expansion of the Dge lugs pa empire during the second half of the 17th and early 18th centuries. Mulling over the question of impermanence, Dpal ldan bkra shis quotes (2002: 13) other authorative masters of the Gsar ma pa tradition, like Jo bo rje dpal ldan Atisha.

> ‘This life is short and there are numerous branches of knowledge. Not knowing how long I shall live, like a goose imbibing milk from water, I shall take up what I wish’ . . . ‘The desire to obtain much is the cause of distraction. Hold in your heart the essential words!’ . . . ‘I do not have the reknown of a famous scholar, just a few words understood thanks to the kindness of the lama’, . . . ‘If the lama’s blessings do not enter your mindstream, how hard it is to give birth to experience and realisation, ‘O hermit!’[13]

Dpal ldan bkra shis goes to consult the two state oracles, Gnas chung and Dga’ ba gdong, who tell him most importantly to act in accordance with his own wishes. He should leave the present college and go to study the Profound Path (*zab lam*) from the ‘Excellent Emanation’ of the Great Omniscient Zur, in the Rnying ma pa monastery of Smin grol gling.[14]

It is just around this time, in the winter of 1717–18, that the Dzungar army invades Central Tibet on the pretext of avenging the death of their ally, the Fifth Dalai Lama’s last regent, Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705). The regent was beheaded by the order of Lha bzang Khan, who styled himself as the ‘King of Tibet’, and who was the leader of the Qhoshot Mongols. He had allied his own people with the Manchus, against the Dzungars. Hailed as saviors when they first arrived in Lhasa, the invading army soon turned to violent looting, raping and killing, and

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[13] Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis quotes Atisha.

[14] Founded on the southern banks of the Gtsang po river, in 1676, by Gter bdag gling pa (1646–1714), who was both teacher and disciple to the Fifth Dalai Lama. Dpal ldan bkra shis also spent time at Rdo rje brag, another important Rnying ma pa monastery, founded a few decades earlier, in 1630, by Rig ’dzin sngags gi dbang po (1580–1639), not far away, on the northern banks of the Gtsang po.

the population turned against them. They rode out through Central Tibet, laying waste to a number of Rnying ma pa monasteries, including the main centres of Smin grol gling[15] and Rdo rje brag, where Dpal ldan bkra shis had just taken up Rnying ma study and practice. They brutally killed the chief lama of Rdo rje brag, Rig 'dzin chen po pad ma 'phrin las (1641–1718), and the distinguished scholar, Lo chen Dharmashri, brother of Gter bdag Gling pa, as well as many other high Rnying ma pa lamas.

Dpal ldan bkra shis writes (2002: 14) laconically with regard to his painful situation in the midst of it all, on both sides of the fence, as it were: 'Many good, bad and medium circumstances arose. The 'outer circumstance' occured in the year of the Fire Bird (1717), when the surging (*lud*) border armies harmed both the teachings and politics, destroying the happiness of the whole of Tibet'. The 'inner circumstance' were, he writes (2002: 14), 'two Dzungar monks, the Abbot (*khri pa*) of Sgo mang College, Blo bzang phun tshogs, and the Chief Disciplinarian (*dge skos*), Klu 'bum bstan pa yar 'phel, who—it goes without saying—were high and mighty enemies for the likes of poor humble me. They were even too high for the Victorious Lords, Padma' byung gnas and the Ominiscient Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho![16] Lastly, the 'secret circumstances' were tumultuous dreams.

> 'So, when the enemy came at the end of Gser 'phyang (*Me mo bya*, Female Fire Bird) and the beginning of the Earth Dog year [1718], I fled from Dbus to Khams. Arriving at Srin mo rdzong, I found the essence of pure meaning. The kindness of the lama and the enemy are equal. How amazing it is when unfortunate circumstances arise as friends! Reflecting on this makes melaugh out loud. Now the enemy has disappeared into the realm of the vacuity while I, the humble one, gaze on. Alas! The marvels of spiritual experience and the billowing illusions of this world appear more illusiory than illusion itself! No need to seek elsewhere! Who can distinguish betweenthis and last night's dream?'

15 The rebuilding of Smin grol gling was supervised by Gter bdag gling pa's son, Gdung sras rin chen rnam rgyal and his daughter, Rje btsun mi 'gyur dpal sgron, and backed by the 7th Dalai Lama, and Pho lha gnas, who drove the Dzungars out of Tibet in 1720, and who also supported the rebuilding of the Rnying ma pa monasteries.

16 The passing away of the 'Great' Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682), had been kept secret till 1696. Thus Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis appears to be writing about the Dzungar invasion, 22 years later, but perhaps referring also to the considerable violence that accompanied the founding of the Dga' ldan pho brang government, the spread of the Dge lugs pa church throughout Tibet, the attempts to contain the border regions and to create alliances in Central Asia, notably with the Mongols. This expansion led to widespread confrontation with the other orders of Tibetan Buddhism, notably the Rnying ma pa, Bka' brgyud and Bon po.

'The following is to show how, in general, the Tibetan Realm, Bod khams, suffered the suffering of impermanence during the war, and how for humble me, being obliged to flee in order to pursue spiritual practice, it was an encouragement towards virtue. Yet simultaneously the seeds of negative action were planted, both arising in alternating fashion.[17]

'It was due to these circumstances that I left the college. If I were to explain the manner of my departure, though the enemies were human beings of flesh and blood, they were led by a spirit of vengeance and though the story would make even the enemy cry, I shall leave it suspended in a state of equanimity for the time being.' (2002: 14)

'Thus, at the end of the Bird year, when the enemy arrived I went to stay for a week in a cave near Dge 'dun sgang, east of Dga' ldan monastery, to practice visualisation on the *Yi dam* deity. I was beginning to plan for a two or three month rereat, when outer circumstances made me wander and I went off in the direction of 'Bri gung, where I met the Sublime Elder and Younger *sprul sku* [the old and younger 'Bri gung Che tshang and Chung tshang], and from there on to Gter sgrom and [Gdan sa] Thel. Little by little, via Lha ri Sna bstod rgya shod ban mgar, I reached the holy place of Srin mo rdzong in Khams. The [geo-morphic aspect of the] place forms a crest—the central *dbu ma* channel—with two rivers [running] right and left, symbolising the *ro ma* and *rkyang ma* channels. As it turned out, I was obliged to stay there and in the surrounding region for three or four years, and the fact that it was not a waste of time accorded perfectly with the excellent prophecy made at Nag shod by La mo Chos skyong Rinpoche, who told me when I asked him where I should go, 'Though harassed by the enemy—negative conditions—do not meditate with an ill-intentioned mind. Accept loss [*khas nyan*?] with humility. You will be pressed to escape to the north-east'. Around that time, I had asked for another divination from a *mo ma* divinor who said, 'You like a humble child, you have a great enemy like an elephant. But you have a strong 'enemy god', *dgra lha*. Even if you don't practice you will accomplish [the practice of] the deity [*lha 'grub*]. Even if you don't kill him, the enemy will die'. I think that the divinor was perfectly right!' (2002: 14–15)

'I was wondering what would happen next when, thanks to the dual united power of the Great Fifth's Protector of the Teachings [*bstan srung* Remati, Tib. Dpal ldan lha mo] and the Protectors of the Word,[18] and furthermore thanks to the general good merit of the Tibetan realm, Bod Khams, and [the oracles] Skyes mchog Thig le rtsal and White Brahmā,[19] thanks to them, the Sun of the Precious Teachings of the Holder of the White Lotus [*Spyan*

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[17] For example, venting his anger and making vociferous critiques of others, see below. The in-text note is in smaller script in the original text.

[18] *Bka' srung*, the indigenous deities of Tibet 'bound by oath' to protect the Dharma by Mtsho skyes (Padmasambhava).

[19] The present-day *sku rten* of the Tshangs pa dkar po oracle resided in exile, in Dharamsala, until he passed away recently (Kyisar Ludup).

> *ras gzigs*] shone, making the terrible hosts of *dam sri* demons disappear without a trace. Thus I believed in the *mo ma* too.' (2002: 15)

Describing further the wonderful geomanic layout of the retreat at Srin mo rdzong with its 'outer, inner and secret aspects', its 'eight mountains and eight lakes' and four cascades in the four directions, symbolising 'peaceful, expanding, powerful and wrathful activies' (*zhi rgyas dbang drag*) and so on, Dpal ldan bkra shis remembers how he was able to survive there 'by reciting prayers' *zhabs brtan*, i.e. *Prajñāpāramitā* and *Kanjur* texts, and by teaching reading and writing, *dpe bri*, etc. so 'I could make offerings and obtain the three initiations, transmissions and instruction, as the heirloom (*pha 'bab*) of the fathers (previous lamas).' Then he exclaims (2002: 15): 'How lucky am I, the humble one, to be here! I who have nothing at all, not even a needle and thread.' At the same time, he notes yet again that he receives many 'precious jewel teachings, initiations, transmissions and instructions', and especially that he gets 'practical instructions (*nyams khrid*) in the Great Perfection and Mahāmudrā, arriving at the point of smelting and refining' (2002: 15).[20] Thus, he declares (2002: 15): 'I feel a little satisfaction, thinking of myself as a truly direct disciple, free from vacuous pride.'[21]

Then he returns to Lhasa one last time, in 1725, before leaving for good, after over a decade in Central Tibet and Khams. He travels once again via Nag shod 'Brong sna monastery, near Srin mo rdzong in Khams, where as he writes (2002: 15):

> 'I gathered donations [*yon*] from almost all the villages in return for performing *rim 'gro* rituals. Thanks to these I was able to travel back to Mdo smad, via Khri ka, to my own Golden Valley of Reb kong, arriving in the month of the [Fire] Horse New Year [1726].

With regard to his activities in Reb kong, he concludes at the end of his autobiography (2002: 16),

> 'From the year of the Fire Sheep [1727] up to the present time [1742], in Upper and Lower Rebkong, in Kha gya to the East, Hor Sog to the South-West, La mo to the north-west, the Five Lakes to the north; the Eight Holy Practice Places of Rebkong and La kha, and the old earth fort of Mkhar gong too, in all these holy places that are equal to those of Central Tibet, I have been giving initiations, transmissions and instructions, *dbang lung khrid*, as laid out below.

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20 *Zhun thar bcad pas:* smelt and refined, scrutinised thoroughly, resolved completely.

21 *Da lta snang sems la a ma 'thas tsam gyi dngos slob.*

Continuing his reflection on the ‘Medicinal Land of Snows’, he recalls the establishment of Buddhism by Padmasambhava before going on to evoke the degenerate age, the ‘border armies’ and the reflowering of the teachings thanks to the rediscovery of numerous hidden treasures (i.e. during his lifetime or just before, in the 17th c.). He mentions especially the founder of Smin grol gling, Gter bdag gling pa (1646–1714), and Nyi ma grags pa (1647–1710),[22] famous Treasure finders during the reign of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, who spread the Rnying ma pa teachings in all directions and who both both died before the Dzungar invasion. He continues with humility,

> ‘Someone like me, with the name of Rig ’dzin, went to meet both of their sons. I met many of their ‘treasure disciples’ who held the transmissions and received numerous ‘initiations, transmissions, good advice and oral pith instructions from them. So, when I reached this valley here, I let fall a rain of Dharma in accord with the desires of each and every one, putting many of those with karmic connections onto the path of maturation and liberation.’

Here there is a play on words, since he uses the term ‘maturation and liberation’, *smin grol*, reflecting the name of the monastery founded by Gter bdag gling pa, Smin grol gling, where he had gone to study, just before and probably in the midst of the Dzungar attack.

The next section is taken up by a somewhat detailed listing of the ‘initiations, transmissions and instructions’ (*dbang lung khrid*) that he gave in Reb kong and the surrounding lands, saying that this was the ‘main activity of his life’ from 1727 through to 1742, a year before he was assassinated. Seven pages list the teachings (2002, 17) he gave in A mdo, with the name of each cycle or *sādhanā*, the number of listeners present, their place of origin, their ethnic group if applicable and religious affiliation. Most of the disciples appear to be from small local communities, with those attending the teachings ranging in number from seven through to fifty, and later on to five hundred. He describes them diversely as *ban, bon, sngags pa, a mchod, ban rgan, gcod rgan, ban sngags, ban sgom, bon sngags*, etc.[23] He clearly covers a wide territory and a large number of localities, moving constantly from one place to the nextover a period of fifteen years.

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[22] See Treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Dzogchen-Drubwang-02-Gyurme-Tekchok-Tendzin/93.

[23] It would be useful to try and determine what distinctions in roles and functions are implied here by these different titles, but fieldwork would be necessary.

Dpal ldan bkra shis (2002: 23) ends this lengthy section in verse, playing with the word ‘great’ (*chen*) in the first strophe,

> Neither raised above the crowns of *great* chiefs, nor serried amongst the ranks of taxpayers of the *great* encampments, I obtained the Dharma-treasure-jewel of the *great* Treasure-discoverers, I received from the Dharma the essential *great* meaning.

The next two sections (2002: 25–26 & 27–31) provide listings of the teachings that he himself received, according to both the ‘New’ Gsar ma pa tradition and the ‘Old’ Rnying ma pa tradition. He gives a rough idea of his age at the time of the teaching, the place, the lama’s name, the cycle and the type of transmission he received, *dbang lung rjes snang* etc., beginning each section with a traditional commentary.

Gsar ma pa Teachings Received

‘Salutations to the Gurus and Omniscient Lamas! So that the teachings of *Sūtrayāna* and *Tantrayāna* of the Victorious Omniscient One shall be adequately in accord with the minds of individual disciples, who are divided into rapid, slow and deep. However, those who fall into prejudice and say, ‘This is good and this is bad’ are the general enemies [*bstan pai spyi dgra*] of the teachings. Saying this, I have no reason to become an enemy of the Dharma. Especially, since I fear the Vajra Hell of those who abandon it. Therefore, in order to put down in writing, just a list of all the initiations, transmissions and explanations I have received, without omission or addition—all that has been my lot—I shall do it as best as I can, in order to please the virtuous gods on the White Side. And you can curse as much as you like!’[24] (2002: 25)

Rnying ma pa Teachings Received

In 1714, in the year of the Wood Horse, in Gung thang, Central Tibet, at seat of the Lord of Beings, the *sprul sku* of Omniscient Great Zur, Ngag dbang bla ma kun dgai dpal ’dzin, filled up the casket of my heart with the essence of instructions: *bla ma gsang ’dus, bka’ rgyad, bde, ’dus, rta mchog Padma dbang chen red and black; ’Jig rten dbang phyug, Phyag rdor me*

[24] *Nag ris sdig ro je ltar byas na yang byas.*

phreng etc., these profound teachings, *bka gter zab chos*, with the initiations and supporting transmissions. (2002: 27–31)

The following text (2002: 32–118) is also authored by Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, and the title is: A Melody of Amazing Joy: A Flowing of Words on the Practice of the Lama who goes by the Name of Rig 'dzin (*Bla ma rig 'dzin ming can gyi spyod tshul brjod pa'i gtam gyi rgyun ngo mtshar dgyes pa'i glu dbyangs*).

This is apolemic discussion in defence of the Rnying ma pa tradition in the face of expanding Dge lugs pa orthodoxy, and indeed this becomes the major motivating principle in the latter fifteen years of his life.

> 'Without any exaggeration, speaking with frank words ... At one time when I was in Reb kong ... a few *dge bshes* were making ironic remarks, doubting whether Padmasambhava ever came to Tibet, wondering whether he really existed or not. So, since some *sngags pa* who are of feeble intellect might begin to doubt, I explained in detail how the Indian yogin is mentioned, in numerous serious Tibetan historical texts, as having built Bsam yas and having bound the gods and demons of Tibet under oath.'

He pursues his argument in support of the historic existance of Padmasambhava by quoting the works of important masters, i.e. Sa skya Pan chen's *Treatise on the Three Vows* (*sdom gsum rab dbye*), Bu ston's *History of the Dharma*, 'Gos gzhon nu dpal's *Blue Annals*, and *Bod kyi rgya(l) rabs*[25] etc. He especially mentions (2002: 36) the famous scholar, Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1570–1662), who ordained the Fifth Dalai Lama and who later became the first Panchen Lama.

Below are further examples of his critical stance with regard to what he saw and disapproved of in the context of unbecoming behavior and religious strife in his day.

> '... Not upholding one's own discipline and behavior, criticising that of others, such people who don the guise of benefitting of others, destroy their own teachings. When scholars do not speak like scholars, when monks do not behave like monks, reporting whatever they hear with their ears, these are scholars and venerable monks who show signs of wanton talk. Hermits who practice evil black mantras, leaders who go to war, ordinary people who steal with alacrity, these are evil signs of the destruction of the teachings. The kingdom is full of sickness, epidemy and famine. The land is full of disturbances of the times. Those who practice the Dharma are full of jealousy. These are the signs of the decline of the teachings. Alas, in such an age,

[25] Is this the *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* by Bla ma dam pa bsod rnams rgyal mtshan (1312–1375)?

> if there is a great monk, let him uphold the law of the Dharma! If there is a great hermit, let him meditate on the good mind! What use are flourishes of pretentious words! If there is a great chief, let him uphold the law of the Realm! How embarassing the bowl filled with one's own desire! If one has prejudice, this is even worse [?]. Protect living beings with loving kindness! (2002: 40–41)

Further on,

> 'Guru Padma Siddhi Hum! Someone like me, neither a monk nor a Bon po, neither one nor the other, a man from the land of dreams, following after illusions, in a *sngags pa* village called Dgu rong, I was explaining and discussing Mantra.When listening to a few *dge bshes* yearning for greatness, and some haughty *sngags pa* yogins, the following thoughts arose in my mind. 'If one does not examine one's own faults, one gets bound up in what appears as haughty pride, hypocricyand face-saving. At this point, uncertain gossip sometimes slips from one's tongue'. With these thoughts circling through my mind, I pronounced these true words: 'Some [of you] *dge bshes* desire greatness. If you are great, your compassion must be great. But the pride in pretending to be good reduces your qualities, I think, and turns them into faults. If you sit proudly on a high throne and teach the Dharma to benefit others that *is* great—but only if you have greatly beneficial intentions. But if you think to yourself: 'Ah! This is me . . .!' Then what is the use? Even diety pride must be layered over with compassion, so that in the meantime the beneficial mind reaches the point of transforming into pure motivation, gradually moving towards Great Compassion. Then it is said you are close to Great *Bodhicitta*. It is good to recite the six-syllable mantra, not just perform it like a parrot. It is excellent to give good teachings, not just to reproduce empty echos.' (2002: 81)[26]

Conclusion

To resume his life story as is done in the preface, Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis was born in Reb kong Rgyal po Chu ca village, and took vows as a monk at the age of thirteen. He entered Reb kong Rong bo dgon chen, and at twenty five joined Sgo mang College in 'Bras spungs near Lhasa, where he stayed for four or five years, not concentrating too much on his studies. He found some of the company there far from genial. He caught smallpox and went to get advice from the two main state oracles of Tibet, Gnas chung *chos rje* and Dga' ba sdong. They advised him to leave Sgo mang, and go to Smin grol gling and Rdo rje brag etc., where he studied with

[26] Translated with the help of Dr Nida Chenagtsang, 31 March 2012.

numerous masters who followed a Rnying ma pa non-sectarian tradition, heralding the rise of the *ris med* movement in 19th century in Khams. He fled eastwards to Srin mo rdzong in Khams during the Dzungar invasion and spent a few years there before returning to Central Tibet when the troubles were over. After a visit to the seventh Dalai Lama he returned a little later on to A mdo in 1726. From that time onwards, between 1727 and 1742, Dpal ldan bkra shis gave initiations, teachings and transmissions on the *snga ’gyur* Rnying ma tradition, spreading it far and wide, especially in Upper and Lower Reb kong, in Kha gya to the east, Hor and Sog to the south and west, La mo in the north-west, and the Five Confederation to the north (2002: 15–16). Dpal ldan bkra shis also established his own hermitage at Rig ’dzin rab ’phel gling in Chu ca, in the valley of his birth.

In one of his mystic songs he writes,

> Nowadays in this land of Reb kong, those who introduce the Divine Yidam to the *mantrins*, who hold the lineages of the Ancient Tantric tradition, are as rare as flowers of gold. I asked my Dharma Protector for a prophecy, I listened to initiations, teachings and transmissions of the Old Tradition. Therefore nowadays, since I have taught these *mantrins*, everyone has great faith in me…

In 1743, he passed away ‘killed for no reason, unjustly accused’, *ma nyes kha yogs*, but he was not forgotten. As Zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol (1781–1850), the great 19th century poet from Zho’ong in Reb kong, wrote (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes ’od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 31): ‘In general, the very kindest amongst all the lamas of Tibet are the Omniscient Klong chen rab ’byams and the Conqueror Blo bzang grags pa. In particular, amongst all the lamas in the valley of Reb kong, the two kindest are Venerable Skal ldan rgya mtsho,[27] and Rig ’dzin Pal ldan bkra shis’. It is said orally that there were several volumes of the latter’s collected writings, but after he was killed his family offered all they had to the ‘pillow-side lama’, Rdzong dkar Mani Shes rab bkra shis.[28] After he died, the monastery invited ’Jam dbyangs bzhad pa, founder of Bla brang bkra shis dkyil, and offered him all of Dpal ldan bkra shis’s writings. It is said that he took them back to his monastery (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes ’od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 31).

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[27] Shar Skal ldan rgya mtsho (1607–1677), founder of the main Dge lugs pa monastery in Reb kong, Rong bo dgon chen.

[28] He who attended on Dpal ldan bkra shis when he was dying.

Rig 'dzin pal ldan bkra shis, as he came to be known, was pursued at critical moments in his life by biased practitioners. His death in 1742/43 is surrounded by murky circumstances and yet he remains unbiased in the *ris med* sense of the term to the very last, as he wrote (2002: 57),

> Space has no colour. If it had, how could it be called space? A yogin has no prejudice. If he had, in what way would he be a yogin? The essence of space is without any reference point. The brilliance of its essence is distinct clarity. Its multiple effusion carries no confusion. The mentations of mind display the multitude of phenomena, in every direction without biais.[29]

The preface and autobiography confirm again and again that Dpal ldan bkra shis's vision of religious practice was non-sectarian, *ris med*, and that he struggled always to uphold an unbiased view. This comes over clearly in all his writings and yet he was falsely accused, *ma nyes kha yogs* and his works and the search for his re-incarnation were banned after his death. The echos of such stigmatisation, or victimisation, appear in several of his mystic songs (*mgur*).[30]

> I, a yogin, am slandered by gossiping mouths!
> With just one (demonstration of the) chain of causations I clear it up.
> I, the sun and moon, am suddenly covered by cloud!
> All in one go, in one day and night, I clear it up.
> I, pure crystal, am blackend by charcoal!
> With pure clear water, I clear it up.
> I, the vulture, am lost amidst hawks!
> With one meal of right food,[31] I clear it up.
> I, a true Dharma practitionner, am hailed as a friend by those who avoid the Dharma!
> With one true karmic link, I clear it up.
> I, the unbiased one, am turned into a site of prejudice!
> With one sincere thought, I clear it up.
> I, who accomplish virtue, am thrown out of the valley!
> With one Dharma practice, I clear it up.
> I, the bodhisattva, am led onto a bed of indolence![32]

[29] *Nam mkha' la ni kha dog med/ yod na nam mkha' ga la zer/ rnal 'byor pa la phyogs ris med/ yod na rnal 'byor ci la yin/ nam mkha'i ngo bo dmigs su med/ ngo bo'i rang mdangs so sor gsal/ sna tshogs thugs la 'khrul pa med/ thugs kyi 'char sgo phyogs bcur dbye//*

[30] For example Preface, 3. *Don byed nus pa = dngos po*, a thing that can be used. *Nam mkha* = space. Thus it reveals its capacity to accomplish beneficial action, but it is immaterial, *don byed nus ston/ dngos po med.* Thanks to Kyisar Ludup for help with this passage.

[31] Similar to 'You are what you eat', in the *log 'tsho lgna*, the five kinds of wrong livelihood.

[32] This is a proverb, *gtam dpe: Bla ma'i a ma snyal ba sman pa'i a ma sangs rgyas*. The mother of the lama is put to bed. The mother of the doctor attains enlightenment (?).

With a single thought put intoaction, I clear it up.
I, a *mantrin*, am placed in the ranks of the listener *arhat!*
With one *bskyed rdzogs* practice, I clear it up.
I, who speak the truth, am cast amidst lies!
With one (ordinary) white-cum-black act, I clear it up.[33]

Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis and several other leading personalities of the *sngags mang* community should be remembered as players in the development of the non-sectarian *ris med* movement. Dpal ldan bkra shis belonged whole-heartedly to the *ris med* order. He was a fierce opponent of those who create turmoil through sectarian prejudice and strife. Thus his followers, the yogins of the Rnying ma or Ancient Tantrayāna tradition, in Reb kong and the surrounding regions, are strongly linked with the ‘universalist’, ‘impartial’, ‘non-sectarian’ movement that developed in Khams, the south-eastern province of historic Tibet, in the 19th century. Numerous exchanges took place and continue to take place between the scholar-yogins (*mkhas grub*) of the two eastern provinces, between the 17th and 21st centuries, confirming the existence of triangular links between them and Central Tibet (TAR).

The Dge lugs pa hegemony was victorious in the 17th and 18th century thanks above all to military backing from the Qoshot Mongols who took over the rich pasture lands south of the Kokonor Lake, in the heartlands of A mdo, the north-eastern province of historic Tibet. Though the Qoshots were deeply faithful followers and supporters of the Dge lugs pa order and the Dalai Lama, the violence of their takeover in Central Tibet seeded a reaction within their own ranks. Over several generations, at least one member of Gushri Khan’s ruling clan converted and became a practicing Rnying ma pa householder yogin, and at least one became a reknowned teacher (Smith: 2001). As Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis (2002: 99) writes: ‘There are different ways to liberation. Respect them.’[34]

Today, the community of ‘1900 *sngags mang* Yogins’ is thriving, as the largest community of lay householder practitioners in the Tibetan world, with around 4000 farmers and nomads, who can simply disappear as ordinary laymen and women when danger arises from near or from afar (Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis: 2002, 30–31).

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33 Preface p. 3.

34 See also page 99 on the multiple languages of Buddhism (Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis (2002, 99).

Appendix I
The 'Eight Practice Places of Reb kong', Reb kong gyi grub gnas brgyad

This appendix is a preliminary presentation of the sites. There are at least three different versions describing the 'Eight Practice Places of Reb kong'. Two are very similar whilst the third presents important variations concerning the founding yogins. Below is a resumé of the information given for each practice place, it all needs verifying, on site.

1) The 'Eight Practice Places of Reb kong' as presented in *Reb gong rig gnas sgyu rtsal zhib 'jug* (Rma lho mang tshogs sgyu rtsal khang: 2009, 637–657).

1. Bcu gcig shel gyi grub gnas or Shel gyi dgon pa, was founded by Ka thog rdo rje dbang po who went from Khams to Reb kong, and saw the site as a Bde mchog. He saw his mandala there. It is located to the east of Zho 'ong village.[35]
2. Stag lung grub gnas, was founded by Grub thob 'O de gung rgyal who practiced here. He was born in Dbus gtsang, just before first *rab byung*, in 'Od dkar khog. His lama, Lha bla ma ye shes 'od, told him to go to Khams. At the time he (Lha bla ma, or 'O de gung rgyal?) was building Tho ling (in west Tibet) and/or Rgyal po Chu ca (in Reb kong) (?).
3. Spyang gi rgva rtse phug pa'i grub gnas. Padmasambhava prophecied in the *lung bzhi* that there are 'four hidden sacred places', *sbas pa'i gnas chen bzhi*, behind Stag lung, on the south-east point. The site is located in Spyang lung village (*sde ba*) in Chu khog village (*shang*).
4. 'Dam bu'i brag dkar grub gnas. Slob dpon 'phags pa li khrod (corr. *khrid* ?) was born in G.yas lung krong ba, around the beginning of the first *rab byung*. He was at first called 'Phags pa skyabs, and performed a special practice, *'Jam dbyangs Nagaraksha*. His Yidam deities were Gsang bdag and Khyug nag. He recovered from a sickness provoked by the *klu* or *naga*. Skal ldan rgya mtso practiced there. It is located in the upper valley of Ljang lung sde ba'i phu, near Mdo ba village.
5. Mtha' smug rdzong dmar dgon gi grub gnas. A thu'i sngags pa G.yu rngog practiced there. He was born between the first and second *rab byung*. He went to Dbus gtsang and Khams when he was young, and

[35] *Shang*, a modern Chinese administrative term transcribed into Tibetan, meaning 'township'. Sde ba means 'village' in Tibetan.

practiced gshin rje bshed etc. In Mtha' smug he practiced the six-armed Mahakala etc. It is located in Rtse khog rdzong, near Stobs ldan village.

6. Mkhar gong grub gnas is the belly-button of Reb kong, a mountain resembling the heart of an elephant, a holy place of the six-armed Mahakala. 'Bol gyi byang chub sems dpa' came to Reb kong in ca 935, from Gsang chu rdzong 'Bol ra 'a mchog. He attained the rainbow body. It is located in Reb kong rdzong, near Nya lung village (*shang*), Mkhar gong village (*sde ba*).
7. Skya rgan grub gnas was founded by *grub chen* Bse rgyal ba byang chub, was born in Bse Nya lung, ca 940(?). The mountain, Do ri dpal gyi ri bo, is a holy place of 'Jam dpal dbyangs (Mañjuśrī), who left his footprint there (or Bse left his footprint ?). It is located in Reb kong rdzong, Blon chos village.
8. Gong mo'i grub gnas was founded by Bon ston pa (Dran pa) Nam mkha'. He was born in Khams 'Bri lung (ca 9th century). He was an unbiaised expert in both Bon and Buddhism. He was sent by his lama, Khu ston brtson 'grus g.yung drung to Tan tig Shel gyi ri bo, and to Dgu rong, near the village of Lower Reb kong rdzong smad.

2) The 'Eight Practice Places of Reb kong' as presented in *Reb kong sngags mang gi lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs* (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 2–25) corresponds largely to the above text (1), at least as far as the place names and the *grub thob* are concerned.

3) The 'Eight Practice Places of Reb kong' in *Yul Reb kong gi grub pa'i gnas chen brgyad sogs kyi lo rgyus bkod pa dvangs gsal shel gyi 'khar ba*, by *btsun gzugs* (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 1198–1215) are as follows:

1. (=1) Gnas gtso bo Shel gyi dgon, NE of Reb kong, next to Zho 'ong valley. The principal holy site amongst the eight, founded by Kathog Rdo rje dbang po. It is a Bde mchog palace, where Dpal 'khor lo sdom pa and Rje btsun rdo rje rnal 'pyor ma'i zab lam are practiced. This is the Crystal Monastery at the White Rock in the Rgan gya pasturelands.
2. (=2) Stag lung grub gnas, south-east of Rong bo dgon chen, at Stag lung dpal gyi ri bo where Padmasambhava defeated the terrible 'gods and demons', and left a footprint beside the river, Gyo mo'i chu, and HA SHA SA MA written in stone with his fingernails. The site was founded by Rnal 'byor pa 'O lde gung rgyal, practicing 'Phags pa spyan ras gzigs. There is a Mani written on stone. On the north side, there is the Chu cha Plain, and the 'Divine Tree' of Chu cha.

3. Behind Stag lung ri, to the south-east, Padmasambhava said that there are ‘Four Hidden Holy Places’: ’Bri lung, Rta lung and Spyang lung etc. (but only three are mentioned).
4. (=4) (nearby) Padma ’bum ’rdzong, or Spyang phu’i lha brag dkar po. See Padmasambhava’s guide (*dkar chag*). There are both Buddhist and Bon po designs etc., (*chos bon gyi ri mo la sogs*). Skal ldan rgya mtsho stayed there and practiced *Thugs rje chen po* (Karsapani).
5. Spyang phu’i ’phar tshang, or Rdo rje pho brang. It is surrounded by all the ‘local deities’ of Reb kong (*Reb kong gyi gzhi bdag thams cad kyi bskor ba*). In the bottom of the valley is the Lha ’dul Plain. There is the entire body of the Supine Demoness who was overcome by Padmasambhava, and who swore fealty to him. (Srin mo gan rkyal du bsgyal nas btul ba’i lus hril bo’i rjes ’dam la btab pa ba). Some also say that there is a sleeping place of Gesar (*Ge sar nyal shul*).
6. Reb kong stod gyi shar ngos ’Dam bu brag dkar. This was founded by ’Phags pa li khrod (khrid ?). He was freed from a naga sickness (*klu nad nas grol*). There is a design of a stupa (*mchod rten gyi ri mo*).
7. (=7) In the forest of Skya rgan gnas mo, great Master Bses practiced and attained realisation in Rgyal ba byang chub.
8. (=8) In Gong mo’i gur khang, the Bonpo Master Dran pa Nam mkha’ practiced and attained realisation. The plain in front is called Bon thang.
9. (=6) On the pass of the Upper Fort of ’Bal gyi mkhar, ’Bol gyi byang chub sems dpa’ practiced and attained realisation.
10. In the secluded retreat place at Nyi ma thel tshes, in Dme shul forest, Rje Manipa Shes rab bkra shis practiced and attained realisation. It is a place of the twelve stan ma goddesses.

Appendix II

A brief chronology:

- 1688/89: Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shisis was into the ancient Rlang family, in Reb kong.
- 1693/94: At the age of five or six, he learns to read and write, and at playtime ‘dances *’chams*, plays the drum and throws *gtor ma*’ not wanting to be naughty or badly behaved.
- 1696/97: At eight or nine, he recites prayers and copies out Buddhist texts.

- 1699: At the age of eleven, he studies a little art (*lha ris*).
- 1701: At the age of thirteen, he takes *rab byung* vows at Sgrub sde bde chen dar rgyas gling. From then up to 1705 he studies with his uncle, Bka’ bcu pa da na sa mi dra, and learns well by heart grammar, reading mantras, and the reciting of ritual texts for villagers.
- 1705/06: At the age of seventeen/eighteen, he enters Rong bo dgon chen (n.b. Bla brang was established in 1709).
- 1713: He goes on pilgrimage to Central Tibet and enters ’Bras spung monastery.
- 1717: He falls sick and goes to Smin sgrol gling.
- 1718: Shortly after the Dzungar invasion (winter 1717–18), he flees to Khams Srin mo rdzong.
- 1721/1722: He returns to Central Tibet and makes a few trips back to Khams.
- 1726: He returns to Reb kong, via Khams.
- 1727: He founds *sngags mang*, the 1900 Phur thog gos dkar lcang lo can yogins of Reb kong, with his main seat at Rgyal po Chu ca.
- 1743: He passes away, ‘killed due to false accusation’ (*ma nyes kha yogs*).

Appendix III

The three main lineages of the *sngags mang*:

RIG ’DZIN DPAL DAN BKRA SHIS (1688–1742). NB. The succession of his lineage is not entirely clear.

Main seat is Rig ’dzin rab ’phel gling, in Rgyal bo Chu ca village, Reb kong.

1. Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis I (*grva pa*) (1688–1742), born in Rgyal bo Chu ca, and founds his seat in the same village, at Rig ’dzin rab ’phel gling.

1/2. Blo bzang Tshul khrims rnam rgyal (1742?–1796).

3. Chos dbyings Stobs ldan rdo rje (1798?–18??)), a monk, *grva pa.*

3/4. Sngags ’chang rdo rje rnam rgyal rgyal po (1860?–1910) (Dge ’dun Chos ’phel’s father), born in Rgyal bo.

5. Grags chen Blo gros (1908?–1931), a monk, *grva pa.*

4/6. A lags Shes rab Rgyal mtshan (dies in 1991).

6/7. Lce nag tshang Nyi zla Heruka (born1971/2).

LCANG LUNG SPAL CHEN NAM MKHA' 'JIGS MED (1757–1821/1769–1833?) (= DGU RONG TSHANG)

Main seat: Khyung dgon, Lcang lung, Reb kong. He reincarnates as or is succeeded by the Dgu rong tshang lineage (see Dgu rong sku phreng snga phyi).

1. Lcang lung dpal chen nam mkha' 'jigs med, born in Dgu rong, lama of Zhabs dkar. A disciple of Mi pham (?). He had three re-incarnations, *sku gsung thugs*. The *thugs sprul* was:
2. Dgu rong sna tshogs rang grol (1822–1874).
3. Dgu rong 'O rgyan 'jigs bral chos dbyings rdo rje (1875–1932).
   He is rumoured to have been the father of Padma skyid's first child. Then he offered her to A lags rgyal po as his *rig ma*.
4. Dgu rong rgyal sras (d. 2000, age 90+). This *chos rje* gave a short Dge 'dun chos 'phel rnam thar to Hūṃ chen Lce nag tshang, recognizing Dgu rong Bstan 'dzin as the reincarnation of his own father.
5. Dgu rong Gar dbang rdo rje (dates ca. 1932–1980?)
6. Dgurong bstan 'dzin (b. ca. 1965). He is now forty or more years and works in Reb kong Henan, as director of education and head of the prefecture (*slob gso zhu krang rdzong dpon*). He decided to become a leader and not a bla ma.

ZHABS DKAR TSHOGS DRUG RANG GROL (1781–1851) & HIS SUCCESSORS

Main seat: G.ya ma bkra shis dkyil, Zho 'ong, Reb kong.

1. Zhabs dkar I, Tshogs drug rang grol (1781–1851), born in Zho 'ong Disciple of Dgu rong I.[36]
2. Zhabs dkar II, (a close ally of Dgu rong tshang II & A lags Rgyal po)
3. Zhabs dkar III, (photo available)
4. Zhabs dkar IV, living as a layman in Reb kong today.

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[36] See Zhabs dkar, vol. 4, letters.

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RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE REB KONG TANTRIC COMMUNITY

Yangdon Dhondup

Introduction

Most of the tantric practitioners from Reb kong belong to the Rnying ma tradition.[1] This tradition was revived in Reb kong in the seventeenth century and is represented by some small yet renowned monasteries (Dhondup, 2013). These monasteries[2] might not have been able to compete in size and stature with their Dge lugs counterparts, but they were nevertheless important places of worship. Founded by some leading figures of the Reb kong tantric community, they provided a site and space for the tantric practitioners to practice their own tradition. The importance of these monasteries is thus not only their historical pre-eminence, but also the clues they provide in terms of understanding the culture and tradition of the tantric practitioners. We know little about the Rnying ma monasteries in Reb kong—when they were founded, the different traditions within the Rnying ma community, the relationship between the monasteries and the tantric practitioners, whether its members took the vow of celibacy, and so forth. In this essay, some of these issues will be explored by examining the rules and regulations of these monasteries as well as that of other minor communities belonging to the Reb kong tantric community. I demonstrate that the rules of some Rnying ma monasteries were considerably less strict than that of other monasteries elsewhere because of one main reason: its members were predominantly *lay* tantric practitioners. It is this "lay" component that not only explains the differences in their rules and monastic duties, but constitutes one of the main elements of their identity.

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[1] There are also tantric practitioners who belong to the Bon or Sa skya tradition. See for example Tsering Thar's article, "Bonpo Tantrics in Kokonor Area." *Revue d'Études Tibétaines*, no. 15 (November 2008).

[2] The term "monastery" is usually understood as a site where a community of celibate monks reside. Here, I loosely use the term monastery to refer to a place of residence and practice for celibate and non-celibate practitioners.

Scholars analysing the classical Vinaya texts—the monastic codes in early Buddhism—have worked on different issues within monastic discipline, ranging from the daily monastic routines to the violation of rules, the consequences of not obeying certain laws, and so forth (Voyce, 2008; Clarke, 2009a; Clarke 2009b; Schopen 2010). We have therefore sufficient material about the history and culture of early Buddhist religious life. By looking at the monastic constitution of the Rnying ma monasteries in Reb kong, some light can similarly be shed on the tradition and culture of the tantric practitioners.

I begin by examining the life of Nam mkha' 'jigs med, who was one of the initiators of new regulations within the Reb kong tantric community. His monastic seat, Khyung mgon, counts as one of the main six Rnying ma monasteries in Reb kong. I then turn to the six major Rnying ma monasteries and answer the following questions: When did these monasteries emerge? Who were the founding figures? Which tradition did they follow? Who were the members of their community? Next, I discuss the structure and organisation of the lay tantric community and the relationship between the Rnying ma monasteries and the lay tantric practitioners. Finally, I analyse the monastic constitution of the different Rnying ma monasteries as well as those of minor tantric communities. Obviously, lay tantric practitioners were not bound by the same vows as the ordained monks whose monastic duties and rules are clearly prescribed in the Vinaya. What follows first is an introduction to Nam mkha' 'jigs med's life, the teachers he met, and the teachings he received from them.

Spyang lung dpal chen nam mkha' 'jigs med (1757–1821)

Spyang lung dpal chen nam mkha' 'jigs med was undoubtedly one of the leading charismatic personalities within Reb kong's tantric community, the *Reb kong sngags mang*, as it is known. Not only was his birth said to have been prophesied by the 8th century Indian master Padmasambhava, but Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis (1688–1743), the "founder" of the *Reb kong sngags mang*, also predicted the birth of this adept master (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 705–706; Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje, 2006: 158). Referred to as a *Grub dbang* or great siddha, Nam mkha' 'jigs med was an accomplished practitioner who underwent many meditative retreats. In his youth, he was courageous and bold, challenging even a group of bandits who robbed the horses of his family (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol

ma, 2004: 708). His sense of humour lifted the spirits of his disciples and his occasional outbursts were feared by even the most important members of the tantric community.

Nam mkha' 'jigs med's life represents many of the stereotypes attached to a Rnying ma pa Buddhist master. He did not take a vow of celibacy, he did not study in any major Buddhist institution and therefore did not acquire a monastic degree, and he did not seem to have authored any works (or they have not yet come to light). He meditated in remote caves, had visions, performed miracles and revealed Treasures (*gter*) (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 730).[3]

In addition to being a highly realised Buddhist master, Nam mkha' 'jigs med was also known for having tightened the rules within the tantric community, and in particular at Khyung mgon mi 'gyur rdo rje gling, the monastery he founded in 1810 (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 44–46). His biography mentions several incidents which indicate that he was a strict proponent of monastic rules and precepts. For example, it is said that he came down from his throne and scolded or even gave a beating to a disciple who failed to follow the regulations during an assembly (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 723).

Nam mkha' 'jigs med's training comprised of many solitary retreats in sacred places such as at the eight holy sites in Reb kong, including an eighteen-month retreat at Rwa rtse (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 711). One of his earliest teachers was the second A lags rgyal bo (Blo bzang tshul khrims rnam rgyal, d. 1784), the incarnation of Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis. From him, Nam mkha' 'jigs med received the complete teachings of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*) (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 711). At the age of forty three, in 1799, Nam mkha' 'jigs med travelled to Khams to receive teachings from Rdo grub chen 'jigs med 'phrin las 'od zer (1745–1821) (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 715). Other teachers from whom he received teachings in Khams included Ka thog sge rtse 'gyur med tshe dbang mchog grub (1761–1829), Rgyal rong nam mkha' tshe dbang mchog grub (b. 1744) and the third Zhe chen rig 'dzin dpal 'byor rgya mtsho (1771–1809) (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 716).

[3] The treasures he found consisted mainly of sacred objects.

Under the advice of Mtshan sgrogs mkhan chen blo bzang dar rgyas (b. 1720), a Dge lugs scholar from Reb kong, Nam mkha' 'jigs med went to meet the third Mkhar rdo rigs 'dzin chos kyi rdo rje (b. 1790–?).[4] Nam mkha' 'jigs med was not the only one from Reb kong who received teachings from the third Mkhar rdo, for the renowned adept and writer Zhabs dkar also received several transmissions from this master (Ricard, 2001: 557). Nam mkha' 'jigs med also studied with 'Jigs med gling pa (1730–1798), 'Gyur med 'phrin las rnam rgyal (1765–1812), 'Ol dga' snang mdzad rdo rje (n.d.) and so on (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 718).

In 1802, by then aged forty six, Nam mkha' 'jigs med returned to Reb kong and gave to the lay and monk communities the empowerment of the Hundred Supreme Deities (*Zhi khro dam pa rigs rgya*), the Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse (*Klong chen snying thig*), the entire transmission of Mkhar rdo Rin po che's pure vision (*Mkhar rdo rin po che'i dag snang*), the revelations of Smin gling khri chen, and so forth (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 719). After two years in Reb kong, he embarked again on a three-year journey to central Tibet and Khams. This time, his main goal was to show his gratitude to his many teachers. There is no doubt that some of these teachers had shaped or influenced Nam mkha' 'jigs med's views on monastic rules and standards.

Nam mkha' 'jigs med's name is conjoined with Reb kong's One Thousand Nine Hundred Ritual Dagger Holders (*Reb kong phur thogs stong dang dgu brgya*), the name by which the Reb kong tantric practitioners later became known to the outer world. The story goes that, when Nam mkha' 'jigs med was once leading a fifteen-day religious ceremony in Khyung mgon monastery, he presented to each of the participants a wooden ritual dagger as a gift. By the end of the ceremony, he had distributed one thousand nine hundred wooden daggers (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 46). Since most of the tantric practitioners from Reb kong were present at this ceremony, this number was thought to roughly reflect the total number of tantric practitioners then living and practising in the locality, and henceforth, the community was known under this name after this event.

[4] On the Mkhar rdo incarnations and the history of Mkhar rdo Hermitage, see Jose Cabezón's work in http://www.thlib.org/places/monasteries/sera/hermitages/pdf/sera_hermitages.pdf, accessed 19 January 2011.

Nam mkha' 'jigs med lived at a time when the *Reb kong sngags mang* counted several great masters among its members. The most famous was Zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol (1781–1850), the yogi and poet widely known for his religious songs (*mgur*).[5] Other notable members included Mag gsar kun bzang stobs ldan dbang po (1781–1832), Rdzog chen chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje (1785–1848), Pad ma rang grol (1786–1838), Khams bla nam mkha' rgya mtsho (1788–1859), Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje (1798–1874) and Skal ldan rang grol (d. 1828). I have discussed in detail elsewhere some of the reasons why so many leading Rnying ma figures emerged at this particular time, but suffice it here to say that the nineteenth century saw a growth and expansion in Reb kong of the Rnying ma tradition and its lineages (Dhondup, 2011).

The Emergence of the Rnying ma Monasteries in Reb kong

Shortly after Khyung mgon monastery was established, other monasteries followed: Mag gsar kun bzang stobs ldan dbang po turned Mag gsar dmar ldang ma into his monastic seat and named it Mag gsar dgon rig 'dzin pad ma rnam grol gling. Dgon la kha[6] was established in 1818 by Khams bla nam mkha' rgya mtsho and Ko'u sde dgon,[7] also founded in 1818, became the seat of Rdzog chen chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 74).

The older monasteries were thus Rig 'dzin rab 'phel gling, the monastery of Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, G.ya' ma bkra shis 'khyil, Zhabs dkar's monastic seat and Nam mkha' 'jigs med's monastery, Khyung mgon. The three newer monasteries were Ko'u sde dgon, Dgon la kha and Mag gsar dgon. What differientiated the older from the newer monasteries was the tradition that they followed.

Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis introduced the Smin grol gling tradition to Reb kong and his monastery naturally followed this tradition, as did G.ya' ma bkra shis 'khyil and Khyung mgon monastery. He also established the tradition known as "The Northern Treasures" (*byang gter*) and another called "Nyi ma grags pa's Treasures" in Reb kong, which the three older monasteries followed (Dhondup, 2013). The monasteries following the tradition of Smin grol gling (and also The Northern Treasures and

[5] For a translation of his songs, see Sujata (2011).
[6] Dgon la kha o rgyan rnam grol bde chen chos 'khor gling.
[7] Ko'u sde dgon rdzogs chen rnam rgyal gling.

Nyi ma grags pa's Treasures) were known as the Old School of the Secret Mantra (*sngags rnying pa*).

The monasteries which placed emphasis on the teachings of the Klong chen snying thig were known as the New School of the Secret Mantra (*sngags gsar ma*). This tradition was transmitted to Reb kong by Rdo grub chen 'jigs med 'phrin las 'od zer (1745–1821). As Thondup (1984: 90) writes: "Rdo grub chen visited Reb kong and other places in A mdo, where he spread the Snying thig tradition." Rdo grub chen was the spiritual teacher for many from the Reb kong area. His disciples included among others Zhab dkar's root-teacher, the Mongol prince or *junwang* (prince of the second rank) Ngag dbang dar rgyas, as well as Nam mkha' 'jigs med, Rdzog chen chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje and Khams bla nam mkha' rgya mtsho (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 72 & 757; Thondup, 1984: 91; Ricard, 2001: xxii). The nineteenth century thus witnessed not only a surge of great Rnying ma Lamas in Reb kong, but also the founding of six Rnying ma monasteries.[8]

The emergence of these monasteries seems to fit with the wider historical development of the Rnying ma tradition, for most of the six major Rnying ma monasteries of Tibet were founded during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[9] In Reb kong, the Rnying ma tradition was reintroduced from two directions, from within and from the outside. As for the external influence, the Rnying ma tradition spread to Reb kong from Khams. In that context, Rdo grub chen played an important part in the dissemination of this tradition. But the tradition also took root in Reb kong thanks to a local person: Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis. Rather than going into detail about the life of Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis here, I refer the reader to the chapter by Heather Stoddard in this volume and my article (Dhondup, 2013). The point to remember here is that he played a significant role in the development of the Rnying ma tradition in Reb kong and is thus celebrated as the founding father of the Reb kong tantric community.

The six monasteries are also referred to as the three seats on the shaded side (*srib kyi gdan sa gsum*) and the three monasteries on the sunny side (*nyin gyi dgon pa gsum*). The Reb kong tantric community was thus known

[8] For a possible reason as to why so many Rnying ma masters emerged at that time in Reb kong, see Y. Dhondup, "Reb kong: Religion, History and Identity of a Sino-Tibetan borderland town" In *Revue d'Études Tibétaines*, no. 20, April 2011.

[9] Smin grol gling was founded in 1676, Rdo rje brag in 1659, Ka thog in 1159, Rdzogs chen in 1685, Dpal yul in 1655 and Zhe chen in 1735.

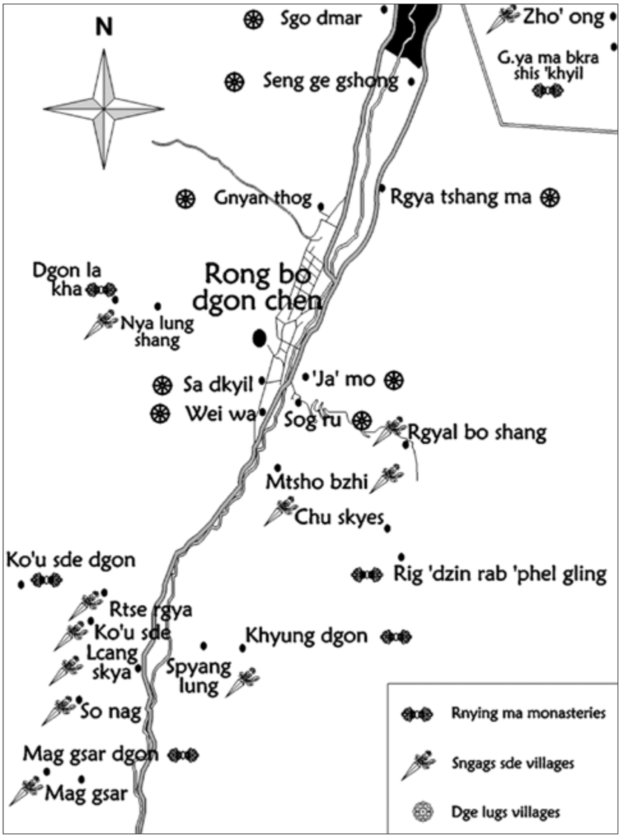
as the tantric community of the sunny side (*nyin lta sngags mang*) and the tantric community of the shaded side (*srib lta sngags mang*) (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes ’od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 13). The shady and sunny side refer to the location of the monasteries on each side of the valley, with the River Dgu marking the border between the two traditions, that of Smin grol gling and that of the Klong chen snying thig practice. To recapitulate, the monasteries which belong to the “shaded side” include Rig ’dzin rab ’phel gling, Khyung mgon and G.ya’ ma bkra shis ’khyil. The monasteries on the “sunny side” are Ko’u sde dgon, Dgon la kha and Mag gsar dgon.[10]

The relationship between the two traditions was far from harmonious. For instance, Khams bla nam mkha’ rgya mtsho, who was one of the leading figures of the “sunny side”, does not seem to have had a good relationship with Nam mkha’ ’jigs med, who was from the “shaded side”. In his autobiography, Khams bla nam mkha’ rgya mtsho writes that when he went to visit Nam mkha’ ’jigs med, his attendents did not let him enter the monastery and Khams bla nam mkha’ rgya mtsho had to sleep for two nights under the stairs (Khams bla nam mkha’ rgya mtsho, 2004: 763). When he tried again to meet Nam mkha’ ’jigs med, he was once more received with hostility. Khams bla nam mkha’ rgya mtsho suggests that Nam mkha’ ’jigs med knowingly did not let him enter his monastery (Khams bla nam mkha’ rgya mtsho, 2004: 764).

Reb kong’s tantric community and the affiliated Rnying ma monasteries

Community	Monastery	Founder	Seat of	Tradition
	Rig ’dzin rab ’phel gling	unknown	Rig ’dzin dpal ldan bkra shis	
Srib lta sngags mang (the tantric communityof the *shaded* side)	G.ya’ ma bkra shis ’khyil	Rgyal mkhan chen dge ’dun bstan pa’i nyi ma	Zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol	Smin grol gling Byang gter (The Northern Treasures)
	Khyung mgon mi ’gyur rdo rje gling	Spyang lung dpal chen nam mkha’ ’jigs med	Spyang lung dpal chen nam mkha’ ’jigs med	Nyi ma grags pa’s treasures (gter)
	Ko’u sde dgon rdzogs chen rnam rgyal gling	Rdzog chen chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje	Rdzog chen chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje	Klong chen snying thig
Nyin lta sngags mang (the tantric community of the *sunny* side)	Dgon la kha o rgyan rnam grol bde chen chos ’khor gling	Khams bla nam mkha’ rgya mtsho	Khams bla nam mkha’ rgya mtsho	
	Mag gsar dgon rig ’dzin pad ma rnam grol gling	Mag gsar kun bzang stobs ldan dbang po	Mag gsar kun bzang stobs ldan dbang po	

[10] The two traditions also have their own representatives, a tantric practitioner who holds the seal of the community. The head of the shaded side is currently Rin chen khyam, also known as Nyang Bla ma. He is a descendent of Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje (1798–1874). For the life of Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje, see Dhondup (2009).



Map 6.1. Reb kong including the Rnying ma monasteries and the villages where tantric practitioners live.

The Rnying ma Monasteries and the Lay Tantric Community

Although I frequently use the term "monastery", it has to be remembered that there were few celibate monks practising at these sites, for celibate monasticism within the Rnying ma tradition in Reb kong was not prevalent at that time. As I have discussed elsewhere, the majority of Reb kong's tantric practitioners were and still are non-ordained, lay practitioners (Dhondup, 2013). Two terms, the *grong sngags* (village tantrika) and the *gser sngags* (celibate tantrika) differentiate the main groups among the practitioners. Within Reb kong's tantric community, most of the members were and still are at present *grong*

sngags—non-ordained, lay practitioners. Also, not all the leading figures of the *Reb kong sngags mang* took the vow of celibacy. For example, it was only Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, Zhab dkar, Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje and Pad ma rang grol who took this vow,[11] while others took consorts, as were normal practice for advanced practitioners in this school.[12]

In general, the family lineage (*gdung brgyud*) is seen as the most important way of entering the tradition, but a person can also train to became a tantric practitioner by showing genuine faith and devotion (*chos gyi rgyud pa*). As for the duties of a tantric practitioner, they include participating at regular ritual practices, of which the most important is the Tenth Day ritual practice honouring Padmasambhava (*tshe bcu'i mchod pa*). Other cyclical rituals include the *yar ngo* and *mar ngo tshe bcu* (the tenth day of the waxing and waning period of the month), both in commemoration of Padmasambhava. The *phur ba* (Vajrakīlaya) ritual practice and the seasonal prayer sessions (*dus bzhi'i chos 'thog*) are also important practices. Tantric practitioners also perform sponsored rituals at the request of individuals or of an entire village. Such ritual services may include controlling the weather, curing diseases, driving away evil spirits or increasing one's luck or well-being. For his or her services, the tantric practitioner receives some money and food.

The rituals are performed at the various Rnying ma monasteries, at the residence of the sponsor, or at the ritualist's own house. Rituals are also conducted in the *sngags khang*, a "tantric hall", a place where a community of tantric practitioners gathers for their ritual and prayer services. Many villages in Reb kong have a "tantric hall", built and maintained by the villagers themselves. From the inside, a "tantric hall" resembles the assembly hall of a monastery. Statues of Padmasambhava and other deities are displayed, as well as scroll paintings (*thang kha*) and photos of local dignitaries. Unlike a monastery, the "tantric hall" is not a residence, but is solely used for ritual and prayer services. The rituals performed at such a hall are of a communal nature—that is, they are performed by

11 Saying that, Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis seems to have fathered a son called Mi skyod ye shes rdo rje. See "Rig 'dzin rap 'phel gling. In Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, *Reb kong sngags mang gi lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs*: 33.

12 Khams bla nam mkha' rgya mtsho mentions in his autobiography a woman called Rin chen sgrol ma as his consort. See Khams bla nam mkha' rgya mtsho, "Yul mdo khams stod ngos su skyes shing byang phyogs mdo smad du 'khyams pa'i sprang po nam mkha' rgya mtsho'i 'khrul nyams rtogs pa'i yi gi gsnag ba'i 'dra chos" In Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, *Reb kong sngags mang gi lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs*, 804.

and for the whole community. Individuals who want to use the hall for their own ritual purposes first need to seek the permission of the village elders.

In some villages, the hall is used by both the Rnying ma tantric practitioners and the Bon followers.[13] In that case, a "border" marks the two traditions whereby, for example, all the Bon po statues are placed on one side and the Rnying ma statues are arranged on the other side.[14] At times, Bon po followers even participate in the prayer services of the Rnying ma community or vice versa.[15] Along with the Rnying ma monasteries, the tantric halls play a central role in the lives of the tantric practitioners, for they are not only used as a gathering place, but also serve as a symbol of the tantric community. Smaller communities may only have a prayer hall (*mani khang*).



Fig. 6.1. The "tantric hall" of Zho 'ong village, Reb kong. Photo: Yangdon Dhondup, October 2010.

The Rnying ma monasteries are the places where the tantric practitioners from Reb kong gather as a whole community. Most of the monasteries hold cyclical prayer and ritual sessions which the tantric practitioners

13 See the villages of Rgya bo and Smad pa, for example.
14 See the tantric hall of Rgya bo village.
15 This can be seen in the village of Smad pa.

attend. Theoretically, each monastery has its own patron community (*lha sde*),[16] but some monasteries even struggle to hold regular prayer sessions due to the lack of sponsors or financial aid.[17] Many of the Rnying ma monasteries do not have permanent residents. To rectify this shortage, some monasteries are eager to recruit celibate monks who would live in the monastery so that they can take on some of the monastic responsibilities such as that of the caretaker.[18] Many lay tantric practitioners spend only a few months of the year at the monasteries, practising at retreat places (*mtshams khang*), which they have built near the monasteries.

The Rnying ma monasteries in Reb kong did not offer much scholastic training—their main function is to serve as a place for ritual practices. Historically, there were also not many tantric practitioners from Reb kong who pursued a scholastic career.[19] The nearest place which offered such a training was the nearby Dge lugs monastery, Rong bo dgon chen. Some went to central Tibet to pursue their studies, but most of the tantric practitioners seem to have been content with practising on their own or receiving tantric initiations.[20] Many also did not have the time and lack financial means to pursue any study, for they have to work to feed their family.

To sum up: What makes Reb kong's tantric community special is their long tradition of *lay* practitioners. This non-celibacy has thus become one of the core elements of their identity. In other words, in the context of the tantric practitioners from Reb kong, monasteries with celibate monks were not the norm. More common was the arrangement of lay practitioners and celibate monks practising side by side. The earliest Rnying ma monasteries which consisted of celibate tantric practitioners (*gser sngags*) were G.ya' ma bkra shis 'khyil and Ko'u sde dgon.[21] At Dgon la kha and Mag gsar, for example, celibate monks only emerged as late as the 1980s

16 The patron communities of, for example, Rig 'dzin rab 'phel gling are: Lcang skya, Spyang lung, Ko'u sde gsum, Smad pa sde bdun, Gling rgya, Tsho 'du, Byang chub, Dar grong, Stag yan, Bya dkar lung and Rgyal bo. For the names of the patron communities of the other monasteries, see Chu skyes dge 'dun dpal bzang. *Reb gong yul skor zin tho*. (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2007), pp. 369–409.

17 This is in particular the current case of Rig 'dzin rab 'phel gling.

18 Discussion with some monks from Dgon la ka. October 2010.

19 One example who stands out is Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis (1688–1743), who went to study in 'Bras spung and obtained a *Dge shes* degree from this monastery.

20 Those who went to study in central Tibet include Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis (1688–1743) and Dge 'dun chos 'phel (1903–1951).

21 Discussion with Hūṃ chen Lce nag tshang, Xining, October 2010.

and 1990s.[22] But Reb kong does not seem to be the only place where celibate monasticsm emerged at a later stage. Ronis (2009: 146), for instance, writes that in Khams, celibate monasticsm in the Rnying ma monasteries emerged only in the mid-eighteenth century.

The monasteries in Reb kong may not have had celibate monks, but all of them had written rules and code of practices. The rules were one way of aligning themselves with other Rnying ma monasteries while at the same time trying to standardize their monastic institutions. What follows is an examination of these rules.

Monastic Rules and Regulations

During the life-time of the Buddha, his disciples who had renounced lay life wandered around teaching the Dharma. The Buddha himself encouraged this by saying: "Monks, take to the road: travel for the good of the many; travel for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world; travel for the good, benefit and happiness of men and gods. Preach the Doctrine" (quoted in Wijayratna, 1990: 19). It was only during the rainy season that these wandering mendicants settled in temporary structures, devoting themselves to studying and meditation. In time, they ceased to wander around even during the dry season. The temporary residences developed into permanent residences and "the collective monastic life developed" (Prebish, 1996: 9). The new monasteries did not only provide shelter for the monks who were travelling from one place to the other, but also provided an opportunity for lay people to interact with the monks (Prebish, 1996: 4–5).

The monks who lived within a monastic community were ruled by a set of laws regulated through the Vinaya Piṭaka, the "Basket of Discipline". Different versions of the Vinaya (*'dul ba*) exist; the Tibetans follow the Mūlasarvāstivāda version. However, as Dreyfus (2003: 114) explains, "the Vinaya is only partly relevant to Tibetan monastic practice." What regulated Tibetan monastic life was the *bca' yig*, the monastic constitution. Not as detailed as the Vinaya, it nevertheless draws on the basic principles of the Vinaya (Ellingson, 1990: 210). In that sense, the *bca' yig* is influenced by the Vinaya, which concerns itself with Buddhist monastic rules (Elling-

[22] Discussion with monks from Dgon la kha and Mag gsar, as well as with Hūṃ chen Lce nag tshang, Reb kong, October 2010.

son, 1990: 209). Tibetan monks study the Vinaya, but only at a later stage of their education (Dreyfus, 2003).

The *bca' yig* is thus a document that focuses "on the practical aspects of daily life" within a monastery (Cabezón, 1997: 337). It "outlines the basic principles, institutions, roles, and rules governing the organisation and operation of a Tibetan monastery" (Ellingson, 1990: 205).

The *bca' yig* examined here include the ones from the main six Rnying ma monasteries as well as others authored by some of the leading members of the Reb kong tantric community. They are written in a fairly concise manner and do not discuss matters related to education, distribution of wealth, the succession to the headship, ownership rights and so on, as can be found in the *bca' yig* written for monasteries where only celibate monks reside. In terms of structure, they are loosely divided into a general and a specific section. Ellingson (1990: 213) writes that "the general section deals mainly with basic principles of the organisation of monastic communities derived from Buddhism and the Vinaya code, . . . while the specific section contains provisions governing the particular monastic community to which the *bca' yig* applies." Some *bca' yig* examined include a brief history of the Buddha, the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, the different lineages of Buddhist masters, or the history of the Reb kong tantric community in the general section. Subjects covered in the specific section include, among others, obligatory rules and responsibilities for the members of the community.

Given the fact that the three older Rnying ma monasteries in Reb kong practiced the Smin grol gling tradition, it seems fitting that we first take a look at the monastic constitution of that monastery, before delving into the rules and regulations of the six monasteries in Reb kong. That way, we may examine the role played by Sming grol gling in shaping the monasteries in Reb kong, as well as uncover specific additions to their *bca' yig* to accommodate local concerns.

The Smin grol gling *bca' yig* was composed as late as 1689, about nineteen years after the founding of the monastery. The author of the *bca' yig* was no other than the monastery founder, Gter bdag gling pa (1646–1714). The general section is fairly short and includes an invocation followed by a brief history of Buddhism and the Rnying ma tradition. In the introduction to the specific sections, Gter bdag gling pa (1992: 275) states that he received among others the permission of the Fifth Dalai Lama and his regent Dde srid sangs rgyas rgya mtsho to build the monastery. He then spells out a list of entrance requirements: Individuals who

are not allowed to become members of the monastic community include among others those who were expelled from another monastery, the disabled, those in debt, people with leprosy, murderers, and those who have escaped from their master or from their family (Gter bdag gling pa, 1992: 277). Then follows a detailed list of the individual and communal codes of practice, which enumerate the responsibilities of the monks, their dress codes, monastic etiquette, the distribution of offerings, consequences for minor and major offences, the daily, monthly and yearly rites and services, and so on.

The variety of content found in the monastic constitutions makes it difficult to list all the aspects of discipline. I have therefore singled out a few topics that are covered in almost all of the *bca' yig* written for the Rnying ma monasteries. They include the use of alcohol, the relationship with women, and monastic etiquette. The fact that these subjects deserved particular mention seems to suggest that there were some problems relating to these issues within the community. The first two topics also reflect a range of criticisms conventionally levelled against tantric practitioners. It is well known that since early times, tantric practitioners attracted much criticism for their various unconventional activities. Ye shes 'od's ordinance, written in the late tenth century, is a prime example of such a criticism (Karmay, 1998).

Consumption of Alcohol. The frequent statements by Tibetan lawmakers to discourage the drinking of alcohol seem to suggest that alcohol was widely favoured, both by the celibate monks and the tantric practitioners. The Smin grol gling *bca' yig* states that drinking *chang* is not allowed, not even a *sing po*, the weak tasting of the remains of a drink (Gter bdag gling pa, 1992: 283). A monk is also not allowed to encourage others to drink and, most importantly, he is not allowed to bring *chang* past the *mtshams tho*, the retreat boundary. It even goes on to say that if medicine needs to be taken with *chang*, the disciplinarian (*dge bskos*) first has to check with the doctor before allowing the concoction to be drunk. The fines for drinking and smoking are the following: For one cup of *chang*, one has to pay a fine of five butter lamps and perform one hundred prostrations. For one cigarette, the fine consisted of sponsoring three butter lamps (Gter bdag gling pa, 1992: 283).

As mentioned, tantric practitioners were often charged with being primarily interested in alcohol and women. Khams bla nam mkha' rgya mtsho, a leading figure of the Reb kong tantric community and founder of Dgon la ka, one of the main monasteries of the sunny side, did little to

dispel such views. In his autobiography (2004: 787), he mentions being drunk after a religious ceremony. On one occasion, he even boasts of drinking close to six-hundred cups of *chang* (Khams bla nam mkha' rgya mtsho, 2004: 802)! However, many of the elite within the Reb kong tantric community were against the use of alcohol consumption or believed that it should be restricted. Nam mkha' 'jigs med, for example, was a main campaigner against the consumption of *chang* within the community. As expected, he was deeply disappointed when a tantric practitioner offered him a bowl of *chang* during an empowerment (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, ed, 2004: 722). He was also not afraid to reprimand Pad ma rang grol in public when he saw him drinking *chang* (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, ed, 2004: 735). It was also Nam mkha' 'jigs med who declared that only one human skull cup (*ka pa la*) of *chang* is to be used for the whole assembly as an offering during a ritual cycle (Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, ed, 2004: 725). Furthermore, each tantric practitioner was allowed to take only one drop of *chang* during that offering.

Zhabs dkar also repeatedly told his disciples not to drink alcohol. In one of his religious song (*mgur*), it says: "Alcohol is the root of all evil actions / Do not drink even a sip of it" (Ricard, 2001: 411). He also gave advice to his disciples: "Give up the root-causes of negative actions, such as alcohol and women" (Ricard, 2001: 286). But Zhabs dkar (2002: 118–126) was most clear about this subject in the *bca' yig* he wrote under the title, "Unlocking the Door of the Dharma: A Series of Regulations Establishing the Laws for the Community of Tantric Practitioners". In this, Zhabs dkar reminded his disciples to "uphold the commitments [*dam tshigs*] made to one's Lama and spiritual peer. In particular, one is not allowed to take the life of a human being, a horse, a dog, a goat, a sheep, a yak, birds or wild animals; to steal or to have a relationship with a married woman; to deceive others by telling a lie; and to take any kind of alcoholic drinks, except for the assembly [*tshogs chang*] and longevity wine [*tshe chang*]" (2002: 124). He then goes on to say that if one drinks *chang*, one first has to recite "om ā hūm", the three syllable mantra standing for body, speech and mind (2002: 125). This way, the alcohol would turn into a nectar drink; without it, it was poisonous. Like Nam mkha' 'jigs med, Zhabs dkar also reminded the tantric practitioners that only one skull cup of *chang* was allowed to be used as an offering during a ritual cycle (2002: 125). He repeated this in the *bca' yig* he wrote for G.ya ma bkra shis 'khyil, his monastic seat (2007). There it is written that "It is prohibited to drink *chang* within the mon-

astery compound, to fight, to kill animals, to steal food, to stone birds or to sleep with women." The punishment for drinking *chang* was two *ras*, a length of fabric equivalent to two metres of cloth (Zhabs dkar: 2007, 75).

Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje, one of Zhabs dkar's main disciples and a contemporary of Nam mkha' 'jigs med, also tightenend the laws against drinking alcohol. In his autobiography, he writes: "During the sādhana practice in Lha khang [name of village], I gave the empowerment of *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba dbyings grol*. I also tightened the law regarding drinking *chang* and appointed Lha khang dbu mdzad as the disciplinarian" (2006: 33). Like his master, he also wrote a *bca' yig* for the tantric practitioners from Reb kong. There he lists the ten non-virtues (*mi dge bcu*) and declares the obligation "in particular, to uphold the commitment made to one's Lama and to abandon drinking, smoking, wearing animal fur, stealing or killing animals" (Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje, 2006: 162). He then cites 'Brug pa kun legs (1455–1529), who supposedly said: "If the saint drinks, *chang* turns into an ocean of nectar; if the commoner drinks, *chang* turns into an ocean of poison" (Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje, 2006: 164).[23]

Pad ma rang grol, who wrote a *bca' yig* for the tantric practitioners from Nyang, also orders them to refrain from smoking and drinking *chang* (2005: 96). In the *bca' yig* of Khyung mgon monastery, written by the second A lags rgyal bo (Blo bzang tshul khrims rnam rgyal, n.d.: fol.3a), the reincarnation of Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, it also says that smoking, killing, wearing fur, stealing and drinking are not allowed.

The frequent mentions of prohibitions against drinking thus suggests that alcohol was a serious problem among the tantric practitioners. However, as mentioned, consuming alcohol was not only a concern for the tantric practitioners. The Fifth Dalai Lama, who wrote the *bca' yig* for Sku 'bum monastery, one of the largest Dge lugs monastery in A mdo, specifies that "except for the inner offering [*nang mchod*] and medicine [*sman rta*], it is not allowed to bring *chang* inside the monastery" (2001: 10).

Interaction with (female) lay people. The other charge made against many Rnying ma practitioners was their ambiguous relationship with women. However, it is also known that in Tibetan Buddhism, certain tantric practices involve sexual intercourse. This of course led to some difficulty in reconciling sexual yoga and consort practice with the Buddhist vows of celibacy. The monastery of Smin grol gling (Gter bdag gling pa, 1992: 279), whose members had taken the vow of celibacy, is quite clear

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[23] *Dam pas 'thung na bdud rtsi'i ryga mtsho ste | pal bas 'thung na dug gi rgya mtsho yin.*

on this issue: women are not allowed to enter the monastery or stay overnight, except for pilgrims and workers. Monks are also not allowed to go alone to a house where a woman resides (Gter bdag gling pa, 1992: 279).[24]

The community of tantric practitioners from Reb kong were more relaxed about this issue, mainly because most of them were non-celibate practitioners. For instance, as one of the most important rules, Zhab dkar (2002: 124) writes that one is not allowed "to have a relationship with a married woman". Note that the emphasis here is on morality and not on celibacy, since this was mainly for non-ordained, lay practitioners. In the *bca' yig* written for his monastic seat, G.ya ma bkra shis 'kyil, Zhab dkar (2007: 71) takes a completely different stand. In there, he states that first of all only "monks, novice monks and fully ordained monks are allowed to stay at the monastery." Zhab dkar (2007, 73) then writes that it is prohibited "to sleep with women" and continues saying that "apart from one's mother or sister, no person of the other sex is allowed to stay overnight in the monk's quarters." As mentioned earlier, G.ya ma bkra shis 'kyil was one of the two Rnying ma monasteries where celibate monasticism was practiced from an early stage.

The other mention of women can be found in the rules (*sgrig lam*) of Dgon la ka's retreat centre. In there, it states that if the helper is a woman, she is not allowed to stay overnight ('Jigs med 'od gsal rol pa'i blo gros, 1995). The *bca' yig* of both places make it clear that the presence of women was not accepted at these sites.

Inner and Outer Monastic Etiquette. Most *bca' yig* instruct the monks and practitioners to behave in a proper way within and outside the monastic compound. Indeed, monks were encouraged to set a good example for the laity. According to the Vinaya (Wijayarantna, 1990: 130), such behaviour will "cause the number of believers to increase." Incorrect behaviour, such as quarrelling or gossiping, was frowned upon and at times was punished by a fine. The instructions were thus aimed at establishing correct conduct based on humility and respect. The monastic constitution of Smin grol gling insists, for example, on "respecting the elders and maintaining a close relationship with one's equals" and orders monks "not to criticise or disparage one's teacher" (Gter bdag gling pa, 1992: 282 & 286). It also prohibits other forms of bad conduct such as slandering other people or

[24] Shayne Clarke offers an interesting read as to whether monks or nuns are really expelled from the monastic order when they commit a grave offence such as having sex or matricide. See Clarke, 2009.

participating in any kind of argument. The punishment for participating in a fight, for example, was relatively severe. A fine of one *mang ja* (communal tea offering), offerings to the deities, one *khal* (a weight measure) of butter, and a hundred prostrations was imposed on any individual who became involved in a dispute in which blood was drawn. The person who responded to a fight had to pay half of the fine. The person who was not injured in a fight had to pay a fine of half of the *khal* of butter and one hundred prostrations (Gter bdag gling pa, 1992: 280). For stirring rumours inside the village or for idle talk, a fine of one hundred prostrations and one *khal* or *nyag* (weight measure) of butter, depending on the severity of the offense, had to be paid by the offender.

Rig 'dzin rab 'phel gling's *bca' yig* (Blo bzang tshul khrims rnam rgyal, fol. 2a–3a) states that although "the rules are according to the Sming grol gling tradition", the purpose of the present *bca' yig* is to clarify the daily routines. It then prohibits idle talk, shows of aggression, or jealousy towards other fellow-practitioners. In the *bca' yig* composed by Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje (2006: 167), it says that "one has to apologise nine times after talking back to the disciplinarian or to a monk of rank". He (2006: 73) also writes that "if one does not observe the line of sitting or misses an appointment, one is expelled from the assembly." Zhabs dkar (2002: 125) orders the tantric practitioners "to follow the disciplinarian when reciting prayers or handling a musical instrument". Likewise, the rules of Dgon la ka (document displayed at Dgon la kha monastery) stress "to maintain a close and friendly relationship with one's study-colleague, to respect those in the higher ranks" and "not to defame other people or use harsh words". The virtues emphasised in the *bca' yig* thus include humility, respect, discipline and obedience. The regulations of Mag gsar dgon (Mi bskyod mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 2005: 339) express this attitude: "To have a strong belief in the teachings while exhibiting timid behaviour."

Image and Aesthetic Formalities. The formalities do not end with correct behaviour towards others, as the practitioner is also supposed to represent an image of a calm and restrained individual. The regulations thus emphasise certain aesthetics regarding body movements such as the proper way of sitting down, walking, eating or even how to keep one's head. Dreyfus (2003: 35) rightly writes that "many of these rules are concerned with maintaining monastic decorum."

The *bca' yig* of Smin grol gling states that after the disciplinarian (*dge bskos*) beats the drum, all the monks should get up (Gter bdag gling pa, 1992: 290). They then "have to practice the prayers of Taking Refuge and

Arousing Bodhicitta (*skyabs sems*), followed by the supplication of the South-Western Sun (*nyi ma lho nub ma*) while maintaining an erect body position" (Gter bdag gling pa, 1992: 290). It is then the task of the disciplinarian to make his rounds to see whether someone has fallen asleep during the prayers.

To the community of tantric practitioners, Zhabs dkar (2002: 125) instructs them to join the assembly in a "calm and disciplined manner". Furthermore, they should "not engage in idle chatter during the assembly", but "sit straight" (Zhabs dkar, 2002: 125). In the *bca' yig* of G.ya ma bkra shis 'khyil, he (2007, 74) orders the monks "not to slouch while sitting down or have one's head aslant, not to lean on a pillar or a friend, and not to engage in idle talk". Zhabs dkar (2007, 74) also instructs practitioners not to look around but to "have the two eyes focus on one's nose".

With regards to eating, he advises "not to make noise when eating *hub* [noodle soup] or *rtsam pa* [roasted barley flour]" (2007, 74). Other manuals insist on having "one's hair laid down during prostration" and "to join the palms when taking refuge" (Mi bskyod mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 2005: 341 & Lce nag tshang hūṃ chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, 2004: 722).

Some *bca' yig* also stress when and how to assemble, enter, and leave a ceremony. For example, the rules of G.ya ma bkra shis 'khyil state that "everybody has to gather when the drum starts to beat and when the horn blows, everybody has to assemble while reciting *Dmigs brtse ma* in a loud voice" (Zhabs dkar: 2007, 73). It also imposes a fine of one hundred prostrations for not participating in the tea break during the assembly (2007, 73). Another manual says that "when leaving, one should not get up in a fast and disorderly way, but rise in a gradual and slow manner" (Mi bskyod mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 2005: 341). The tantric practitioners from Reb kong are instructed by Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje "not to recite in a too loud or too low voice", but "at a slow pace" (2006: 163). He also reminds them "not to yawn" during the prayers (2006: 163).

Dress Code and Ritual Objects. Another subject of importance is the dress code, which symbolically marks the identity of a tantric practitioner. The clothes and distinctive hair style distinguish the tantric practitioner from the monks and laity. Indeed, a tantric practitioner is known for wearing a white robe and having long hair. In Tibetan, they are also known as *Gos dkar lcang lo can*, a person wearing a white robe and having long braided hair. However, the authentic dress of a tantric practitioner consists of a long-sleeved dark-blue gown, a red outer gown and the white shawl (Nyi zla he ru ka, 2004: 86). According to Nyi zla he ru ka, this dress should

be worn only during the ritual for subjugating spirits (2004: 86). A tantric practitioner should also have two different sets of clothing, an elaborate one to be worn during certain ritual and one for daily use (Nyi zla he ru ka, 2004: 88). At present, different tantric comunities have their own rules as to when somebody is allowed to wear the white robe. As I have explained elsewhere (Dhondup, 2011), within certain tantric communities in Reb kong, it seems an individual is allowed to wear the white robe once she or he has mastered the practice of inner heat (*gtum mo*).

Some tantric practitioners who had taken the vow of celibacy wore monk's robes while at the same time keeping their hair long, according to their tradition. Not surprsingly, this unusual appearance sometimes became the subject of mockery. Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje, for instance, tells of an incident when he wore his monk's robe for a teaching: "At that time, I had long hair. I wore my monk's robe and went to the teachings. On the way, some monks pulled my robes and asked me whether I would sell them to them. I felt ashamed" (2006: 12). Zhabs dkar also mentioned the reaction of others to his long hair: "I went to Doby [Rdo bis] Monastery and had robes made. In those days my hair was about three feet long. One of the monks at the hermitages seized a sharp wool-shearing knife and teased me, saying, "Eh, what a nice sheep from Sho'ong! Looks like he's ready to be sheared!" Everybody around burst into laughter" (Ricard 2001: 33).



Fig. 6.2. Tantric practitioners from Jang chub village, Reb kong. Photo: Yangdon Dhondup, October 2010.

Unfortunately, none of the *bca' yig* consulted mention any rules about when to wear the white robe. A brief mention of the dress code can be found in the *bca' yig* of G.ya ma bkra shis 'khyil. As I explained, this monastery was one of the few Rnying ma monasteries which practiced celibate monasticism from an early stage. Accordingly, its members had to follow stricter rules.

Smin grol gling's dress code is understandably severe, for it was a monastery with celibate monks. The *bca' yig* states that the hat, robe, with its outer, inner and upper garment, the belt, and the sandal should be worn according to the rules. Monks should only possess a rosary and a ritual dagger. The rosary should not hang longer than a knife. Monks are not allowed to wear a necklace or own other objects such as a knife. Within the monastery, a monk is "only allowed to wear the pointed hat [*rtse zhwa*]" (Gter bdag gling pa, 1992: 285). Its members also had to pay attention to a certain dress code when they were going out of the monastery. For example, a monk should leave the monastery wearing the complete set of garments and the under garment should not be pulled up (Gter bdag gling pa, 1992: 306).

As for the ritual objects, the *bca' yig* of Mag gsar monastery instructs its practitioners to place the vajra (*rdo rje*) on the right and the bell on the left side (Mi bskyod mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 2005: 340). It further lists the four items needed for an offering, such as nectar, medicine, blood (*rak ta*), ritual cake (*gtor ma*), and emphasises the proper arrangement of the ritual objects (Mi bskyod mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 2005: 341). Like Smin grol gling, the members of G.ya ma bkra shis 'khyil had taken certain vows and unlike the lay tantric practitioners, they had to wear monk's robes. Thus, in the *bca' yig* of G.ya ma bkra shis 'khyil it states that monks have to bring to the assembly their cape (*zla gam*), hat (*rtse zhwa*), *rtsam pa* bag (*tshogs khug*) and wooden cup (*grwa can*) (Zho ra padma dbang chen: 2007, 73).

Concluding Remarks

Celibate monks have renounced lay life in order to live within a monastic community and as a member of such a community, they follow a distinct set or rules laid down for them. Compared to the numerous laws and regulations that govern celibate monastic communities, the *bca' yig* examined here prescribe relatively few rules. One reason for the difference in strictness of discipline is explained by Dreyfus, who states that the rules of local, smaller and less centrally located monasteries tended to

be less strict than those of the large central monasteries (2003: 40). In the particular case of Reb kong, I suggest another and more pertinent reason: The majority of the members of Reb kong's tantric community were and are non-ordained, lay practitioners. Unlike the fully ordained monks who have to observe 253 precepts, the tantric practitioners, because of their lifestyle, do not have to follow many of these precepts. For example, they do not live within the monastic compound. Consequently, many rules and routines regarding the smooth running of the monastery do not apply to them. Also, whereas monks are dressed in their robes all the time, the tantric practitioners wear their special robes mainly during certain ritual ceremonies. Thus, the strict dress code imposed on the ordained monks does not apply to the tantric practitioners, who, in their spare time, wear plain clothes.[25]

In summary, a reading of the rules provides a few insights about the Reb kong tantric community. First, the compilation of the monastic manuals show that the Reb kong tantric community sought to align themselves with other Rnying ma monasteries. The similarity of rules and regulations with other major Rnying ma monasteries is proof in itself of this emulation of the major centres of their tradition. Understandably, adjustments had to be made because of their particular lifestyle. Secondly, the fact that the Reb kong tantric community had written laws and standards suggests that they tried to gain recognition as a centre for learning and practicing Buddhism. Third, the lifestyle of a tantric practitioner seems to be less structured and less controlled by an institution. I have discussed elsewhere the advantage of such an informal environment, namely that it enables the emergence of outstanding individuals outside of the conventional monastic centres (Dhondup, 2011). Here I would like to add that it might also serve as an incentive for members to remain within the community while at the same time attracting new ones. Finally, the rules also

[25] That being said, a tantric practitioner commits her/himself not to break the commitments (dam tshig, Skt. samaya), the codes of conduct of a tantric practitioner. The samaya vows comprise of twenty-eight vows. The most important aspect of the tantric commitment is the devotion and respect shown to one's lama. For a complete list of the precepts see Nyi zla he ru ka, "Sngags pa'i shes rig la dpyad pa'i gtam." In Sngags mang zhib 'jug khang (eds). *Sngags mang zhib 'jug. Sngags pa'i shes rig dus deb*. Xining: Xining Minzu Yinshuachang, 2004, 92–95 and Gyurme Dorje, "The Rnying ma Interpretation of Commitments and Vow." in T. Skorupski (ed.),The Buddhist Forum, vol. II, London: SOAS, 1991. For the different variations of the samaya vows found in the Dunhuang materials, see Sam van Schaik, "The Limits of Transgression: The Samaya vows of Mahayoga". In Matthew T. Kapstein and Sam van Schaik (eds.) *Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang. Rites and Teachings for This Life and Beyond*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

suggest that while the monastic communities elsewhere try to maintain (in theory) with these laws a clear boundary between them and the lay society, the boundary between the lay tantric community and lay society nevertheless seem to have remained fluid.

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BON RELIGION IN REB KONG

Colin Millard

Introduction

This chapter concerns Bon ritual and religion in the Bon community in Reb kong valley in Reb kong county of Rma lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in China's Qinghai Province. Bon is the name of a Tibetan religion with many similarities to Tibetan Buddhism which still has many adherents in contemporary Tibet and in the Tibetan exile community; the followers of this religion are known as Bon po. There are different views concerning the history of this religion and its relationship to Tibetan Buddhism; these will be discussed at the beginning of this chapter. As far as the Bon po are concerned they feel that they are part of a religious tradition which has a historical continuity in Tibet going back prior to the introduction of Buddhism in the seventh century CE. To understand how a unified and bounded sense of community is sustained and regenerated in a region of great ethnic and cultural complexity we need to look at the community not as a set of predefined structures but as a symbolic construct which is constantly recreated through social interaction (Cohen 1985). In Reb kong the unique religious institutions and sequence of annual rituals carried out by both Bon monastic and lay practitioners have served as a powerful resource in maintaining a sense of identity in the Bon community. The discussion will begin by giving a brief overview of the Bon religion in A mdo and then move on to discuss Bon ritual and religion in Reb kong. The chapter is based on a review of the existing literature and several interviews with Bon practitioners during a visit to the area in the summer 2010.

Reb kong Valley

Reb kong (Ch. Tongren) is the name of a fertile mountainous valley situated along the Dgu chu River 190 kilometres southeast of Xining, the capital of China's Qinghai Province. The large area of land stretching down from the town of Xining in the north to the southern town of Songpan (Tib. Zung chu) in Sichuan Province is known in Tibetan as A mdo and

is one of the three traditional provinces of greater Tibet; the other two are Dbu gtsang (Central Tibet) and Khams (East Tibet). During the period of the Tibetan imperial government (7th–9th century CE) A mdo as the outpost of the Tibetan Empire was of military and strategic importance, and it is claimed that some of the present day Tibetan communities in A mdo are descendents of the Tibetan royal army (Karmay 1996, Shakabpa 1984).[1] In the period following the end of the Royal Dynasty, A mdo was politically divided into areas dominated by local leaders and stateless tribal societies, though it retained strong cultural and religious connections with Central Tibet.

1720 marked a watershed in the political life of A mdo when with the ascendancy of the Manchu Qing Dynasty, Tibet was divided into three administrative zones: at this time most of A mdo was incorporated in the new Xining Prefecture (corresponding to the present day Qinghai province), the southern region of A mdo (the Nga ba district) was subsumed into Sichuan province, and the western region of Khams was combined with central and western Tibet and administered as one political unit under the Lhasa administration. As a consequence of this, all political connections between A mdo and Central Tibet were severed, though cultural and religious connections continued (Karmay 1996).

During this period leadership was invested in local Tibetan chiefs known in Chinese as *tusi*. This system of administration had existed in the early Ming period, but it was reformed under the Qing dynasty to give more control to the imperial government. In Reb kong the local rulers were known in Tibetan as *nang so*. The first person to hold this title was Mdo sde 'bum whose title was recognised in 1301 by the Yuan emperor (Dhondup 2011). Although local leaders in A mdo received titles and seals from both the Chinese and Central Tibetan administrations which served the dual purpose of legitimating their authority whilst at the same time establishing their subservient role within a wider polity, in practice these local leaders had a great deal of autonomy. Some areas of A mdo such as the A mdo Shar Khog region of southern A mdo remained politically independent from both the Chinese and Central Tibetan governments up until the communist ascendancy in the 1950s. Furthermore, as Karmay (1994a) notes, after the fall of the Tibetan empire in the 9th century, although

[1] This position was first articulated by Dge 'dun chos 'phel in his historical work *The White Annals* (1978).

some local chiefs accrued great influence in the area, A mdo had never been united and ruled by one leader.

The *tusi* system was scrapped by the Chinese Republican government in 1931 and replaced by a system of counties run by magistrates from the dominant Han and Hui ethnic groups (Huber 2000a). With the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the communists continued the Republican county system of political administration and consequently A mdo is presently divided between the three Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan. The areas of these provinces where Tibetan ethnic populations are in the majority are currently administered as Tibetan autonomous prefectures.

Official statistics from 1990 give a population for Reb kong of 68,349, 82% of whom were Tibetan, the rest are a mixture of Han, Hui and Salar Muslims, Bao'an, Monguor (also known as Tu) and Mongol (Marshall and Cooke 1997). In addition the Tibetans are internally divided between those who follower the Dge lugs pa and Rnying ma pa sects of Tibetan Buddhism and those who follow the Bon religion. Reb kong has the biggest concentration of Buddhist monasteries in Ma lho prefecture; the largest and most influential is the Dge lugs pa monastery of Rong bo dgon chen founded in 1342,[2] situated in the county town of the same name. Most of the Tibetans living in the valley belong to the Dge lugs pa sect. Reb kong is also famous as a centre of Tibetan Buddhist art which is produced in five villages situated around Rong bo monastery (Stevenson 2000, 2005).

The history, ethnic complexity, and geographical location of A mdo brings the question of Tibetan ethnic identity into particular salience. There has been a progressive process of sinicization of Tibetan areas of A mdo which started with the Manchu ascendancy in the 17th century and has continued through to the communist period. It was only after the Dengist reforms in the 1980s that Tibetan language began to be taught in schools in Tibetan areas, and this is still not the case in all Tibetan locations (Karmay 1998a; Kolas and Thowsen 2005). In addition all the Tibetan areas are now subsumed within provinces where ethnic Chinese form the majority of the population. Michael Aris has characterised A mdo as a

[2] The monastery was founded by Mdo sde 'bum, the first *nang so* of Reb kong. According to local tradition, his father Lha rje brag sna ba was sent the Sa skya lama 'Gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa to establish Buddhism in Reb kong. Accordingly Rong bo was originally established as a Sa skya monastery. But with the prominence of the Shar skal dan lineage at the monastery from the beginning of the 17th century it soon after became Dge lugs pa (Dhondup 2011).

zone where geography, culture, and race meet in a 'transitional area of great complexity' (Aris 1992). Despite the fact that A mdo is a borderland on the margins of Tibetan culture, A mdo Tibetans have retained their strong sense of cultural integrity. There is also the additional layer of social complexity for Bon po Tibetans in Reb kong as Bon po have historically been marginalised and vilified by mainstream Buddhist Tibetan culture. Cohen (1985) has shown the important role that symbol has in the construction of community identity. For Barth (1969) this role is most clearly evident at the boundary where different ethnic groups meet. This chapter will explore the role that religion and ritual has in creating a bounded sense of community identity for the Bon po Tibetans in Reb kong.

The Bon Religion in A mdo

The Bon and Buddhist religions,[3] as we know them now, have coexisted in Tibet since at least the eleventh century CE. Contemporary Bon po hold that their religion is different from Buddhism and is a continuation of the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet. Although there is no doubt that these two groups feel themselves to be part of separate religious communities, in terms of doctrine and practice both religions have much in common: both are based on the doctrine that life is marked by impermanence and suffering, and that through the force of karma beings are bound into a constant cycle of death and rebirth into one of the six realms of existence, until through religious practise and virtuous actions they can achieve liberation. Furthermore, both religions use the same word *Sangs rgyas*[4] to refer to the one who has accomplished this state of emancipation, and both religions are based on the teachings of such an individual; for the followers of the four main sects of Tibetan Buddhism it is the Buddha Śākyamuni; and for the followers of Bon it is the Buddha Ston pa gshen rab.

A good deal of confusion about the word *Bon* stems from the way that it has been used to signify a diverse range of meanings. Kvaerne (1995: 9)

[3] Following the convention in western literature I have used the designations 'Bon' and 'Buddhism', though as we can see the use of the word 'Buddhism' here is somewhat misleading. Adopting the more appropriate Tibetan designations, the distinction is between the vast majority of Tibetans who are *Chos pa*, followers of the religion of *Chos*, and a substantial minority who are *Bon po*, followers of the religion of *Bon*. Both Snellgrove (1967: 1) and later Kvaerne (1972: 23) have pointed out that there is no word for Buddhism in Tibetan. The closest approximation is the word *nang pa*, which means 'insiders', but as Kvaerne indicates, this word designates both the *Chos pa* and the *Bon po*.

[4] The Tibetan word means one who has been completely purified.

gives three common meanings that are associated with it in the writings of western scholars: among one group of writings, the word Bon is used to denote the religion that existed in Tibet prior to the arrival of Buddhism in the eighth and ninth centuries; a second group of writings associates the word with Tibetan folk tradition, and forms of pre-Buddhist shamanic practice; the third way that the term is used is to refer to an organised religion known in full as G.yung drung bon, which developed in Tibet in the tenth and eleventh centuries alongside various forms of Buddhism that were imported from India at this time.

There are three different accounts of the development of the two religions: one version is found in Bon po texts, another version is found in Buddhist texts, and western scholars present a third perspective. For the Buddhists, the Bon religion is little more than a plagiarised version of their own religion. There is a long tradition of Buddhist polemical writings on the Bon religion going back to the thirteenth century AD.[5] A good example of the approach taken in this polemical literature is the text 'Crystal Mirror of the Doctrinal System' written by the eighteenth century *Dge lugs pa* scholar Thub bstan blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, which presents the Bon tradition to have passed through three phases:[6] the first phase, 'springing up Bon' (*Brdol bon*), consisted of an unsophisticated primitive popular religion with no literature; the second phase, 'deviating Bon' (*'khyar bon*), involved a new focus on funerary rites and a development in doctrine through contact with other religious practitioners and centres; the third phase, 'transformed bon' (*Bsgyur bon*), was the period when Buddhist texts were transformed and made to appear as Bon texts. The most intense activity of the third phase would have been during the tenth and eleventh centuries AD, resulting in the Bon tradition in its present shape.

The Bon po themselves would readily acknowledge that events occurring in Tibet in the tenth and eleventh centuries marked a major changing point in their religion, but they firmly believe that their religion predates the advent of Buddhism in Tibet by a long period of time. For instance, according to the chronology of the Bon lama, Nyi ma bstan 'dzin (1813–?), Ston pa gshen rab was born in 14509 BC[7] in 'Ol mo lung ring[8] (Kvaerne 1971).

[5] See Martin (1991) for a detailed study of this polemical tradition.

[6] These three phases have been discussed by Tucci (1980: 224), Kvaerne (1972: 29), and Martin (1994).

[7] The text states 16470 years before the final editing of the chronology in 1961 (Kvaerne 1971: 207).

[8] According to Bon tradition 'Ol mo lung ring is a part of Rta gzig, a land situated vaguely to the west of Mt Kailash. 'Ol mo lung ring is a mythological location which is

The Bon canon contains a huge volume of literature; like the Buddhist canon, the Bon canon is divided into the *Bka' 'gyur* which contains 113 volumes of the words of Ston pa gshen rab, and the *Bstan 'gyur* which contains 293 volumes of commentary. Much of this literature is unknown outside the Tibetan Bon po scholarly and monastic community.

According to Bon historical accounts there were six great translators[9] who were responsible for translating and spreading the doctrines of Bon. The disciples of Mu cho ldem drug of Sta gzig translated the teachings into the language of the central Asian kingdom of Zhang Zhung, and it was from here that the teachings were brought to Tibet during the reign of the legendary first King of Tibet, Gnya' khri btsan po. According to Bon historical documents, the Bon religion spread to Tibet from Zhang Zhung which plays the same role for the Bon religion as India does for the Tibetan Buddhist sects. The same Bon sources speak of Zhang Zhung as a large kingdom stretching from Gilgit in the west and encompassing all of western Tibet. Its capital was Khyung lung dngul mkhar ('silver fortress of the garuda valley'), which was situated in the region of Mt Kailash. The Bon po claim that most of their texts were originally written in the language of Zhang Zhung, and accordingly on the first page of many texts the title has been left in this language, in a like manner to the way Tibetan Buddhist texts have retained their original Sanskrit title.

As a consequence of the dominance of Tibetan Buddhism and various waves of persecution of the Bon religion, there is presently only a small number of Bon po in the western and central regions of Tibet.[10] The first persecution occurred in the reign of the eighth King of Tibet, Gri gum bstan po, who banished the Bon po from the land. In response to this the Bon po hid many of their texts for safety. For the Bon po, this persecution marks the beginning of their tradition of rediscovered texts (*gter ma*). This state of affairs was resolved when his son re-established Bon as the state religion. The Bon religion was again persecuted during the eighth century during the reign of King Khri srong lde'u btsan. According to Bon historical sources, it was also during King Khri srong lde'u btsan's reign that Zhang Zhung was annexed to Tibet after the assassination of

similar to the Buddhist realm of Shambhala. For a full discussion of Ol mo lung ring as it is found in Bon texts, see Martin (1999).

[9] These translators are *Dmu tsha tra he* of Stag gzig, *Khri thog spa tsha* of Zhang Zhung, *Hulu Palé* of Sum pa, *Lha bdag sngags dro* of India, *Legs tang rmang po* of China, and *Gser thog lce 'byams* of Phrom (Karmay 1972: 16).

[10] An outline of the history and doctrines of Bon in Tibet can be found in Karmay (1975).

its king, Li myi rhya. Following this, for the second time the Bon po were compelled to hide their texts for safekeeping. The later propagation of Bon in the eleventh century was founded, as it was for the Rnying ma pa, the oldest sect of Tibetan Buddhism, on rediscovered texts. The first Bon texts to be rediscovered were found by three monks from Nepal in Bsam yas monastery in 913 AD, but the later propagation of the Bon doctrine did not really get underway until 1017 AD, when Gshen chen klu dga' rediscovered a larger number of texts, which eventually went to form a major part of the Bon canon.[11] He entrusted the knowledge contained in these texts to three of his main disciples (Karmay 1975: 119), each of whom went on to establish religious centres. One of these centres was the famous Bon monastery of G.yas ru dben sa kha, in Central Tibet.

Most Bon po in present day Tibet are found in the Khyung po and Hor regions of the Khams district of east Tibet, and in the A mdo region of northeast Tibet. The largest concentration of Bon po is in the southern region of A mdo, north of the town of Songpan. In this region which is known by Tibetans as A mdo Shar khog, 95% of the population are Bon po (Huber 2000a) with only small pockets of the Dge lugs pa and Sa skya pa Buddhist sects. It is now divided between the Nga ba Tibetan autonomous prefecture and the Qiang autonomous prefecture of Sichuan province. As previously mentioned, before the Chinese occupation in the 1950s it was politically independent of both China and the Lhasa government in Central Tibet. It was divided into 8 political federations (*tsho ba*), each of which was connected with one of the Bon monasteries in the region (Shrempf 2006). There were 30 Bon monasteries in A mdo Shar khog; during the political upheaval of the Cultural Revolution all were destroyed. Since the cultural reforms of the 1980s, 13 of the Bon monasteries have been rebuilt (Schrempf 2000)[12] and the Bon religion is presently undergoing a tentative renaissance.

The Bon Community in Reb kong

The second largest concentration of Bon po in A mdo is in the Reb kong area. With its large monastery, 15 village temples and abundant monastic

[11] Unlike the Buddhist Bka' 'gyur which does not include *gter ma* texts, almost all of the Bon Bka' 'gyur is *gter ma*. On Gshen chen Klu dga' see Martin (2001).

[12] For an overview of Bon monasteries in A mdo Shar khog see Thar (2003). Studies have also been done of Dga mal monastery (Huber 1998), Snang zhig monastery (Kvaerne 1990, 1997) and Rin spung monastery (Schrempf 2006).

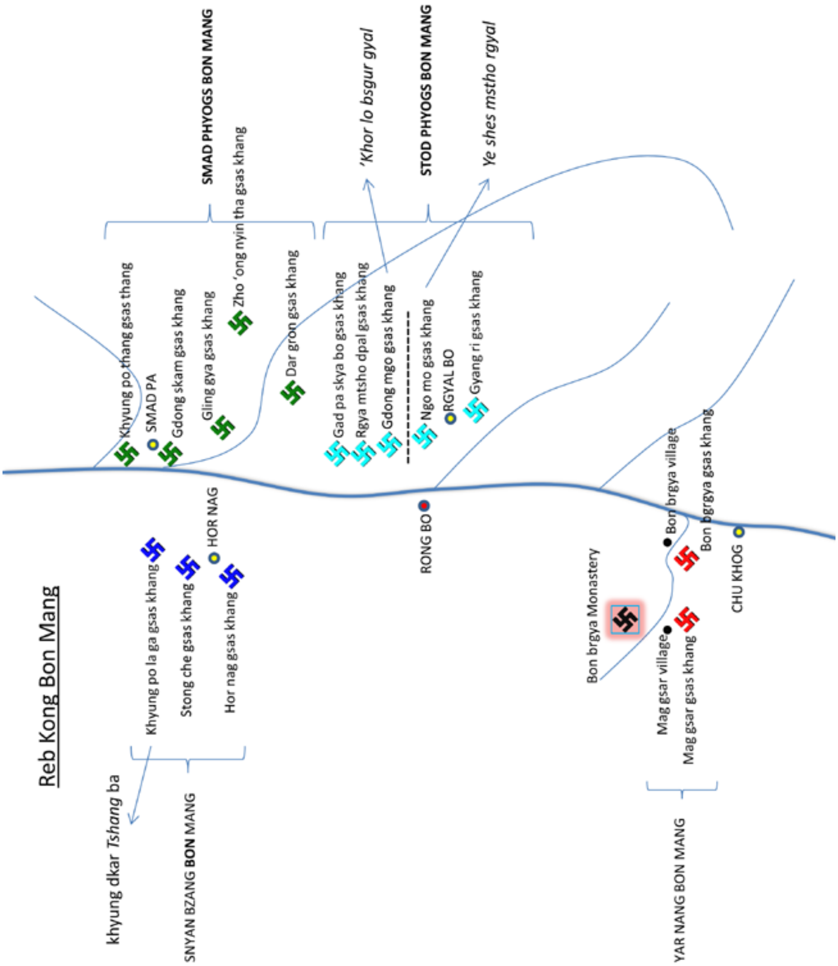
and lay Bon practitioners, it preserves unique features of Bon religious practice. A survey carried out on Bon monasteries in Qinghai in 1996 by the Tibetan scholar Tsering Thar (2003) gives 46 Bon villages in the Reb kong area comprising around 691 families with a total population of 4368; to this can be added around 4000 nomadic people who are connected with the area and who also follow the Bon religion. The villages are situated along the main valley and adjoining valleys covering a distance of about 25 miles north and south of the county seat Rong bo. The ritual life of the community is centred around 16 religious institutions: one large monastery called Bon brgya, and 15 village temples known as *Gsas khang*. The temples are spread throughout the area. Each village has a ritual connection with both Bon brgya monastery and the local temple.

There are no reliable historical documents of the early history of the Bon community in Reb kong. According to oral accounts Reb kong was visited by the famous Bon master Dran pa nam mkha' during the reign of the Tibetan King Khri srong lde'u btsan in the eighth century. As previously mentioned, after the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet in seventh century, the Bon religion went through several periods of persecution in Central Tibet. It was during one such period of persecution that three brothers, all masters of the Bon religion, came from Central Tibet to A mdo.[13] They established themselves in three different villages in Reb kong where they built temples and began to propagate the Bon religion: 'Khor los bsgyur gyal in Spyi rting village, Ye shes mtsho gyal in Ngo mo village, and Khyung dkar Tshang ba in Khyung bo village (Thar 2008). Around the same time the Bon master Dbyings klong rin chen arrived in Reb kong from Central Tibet; his descendants established the Bon brgya village. A small hermitage was built at the village; this was the beginning of what would eventually become Bon brgya monastery which currently has 80 monks (Thar 2003).

Bon Ritual in Reb kong

Ritual is carried out in the 15 Bon village temples by priests known in the area individually as *dpon* and collectively as *Bon mang*. They are the Bon counterpart to the abundant lay tantric ritual specialists in Reb kong from

[13] According to an historical manuscript written by A lag Bon brgya, the head lama of Reb kong Bon brgya monastery, this was in the middle of the 9th century CE at the time of the last king of Tibet, Glang dar ma (Thar 2008).



Map 7.1. The Reb kong Bon mang.

the Rnying ma pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, who are known collectively as *sngags mang* and individually as *sngags pa* or *dpon*;[14] though the Bon tantric practitioners are also sometimes called *sngags pa*. The *Bon mang* is made up of lay people with families who work as farmers or nomads but who are specialists in Bon tantric ritual which they carry out individually or collectively in their temples or in villager's houses. The number of priests associated with each temple depends on the size of the local community; it ranges between 15 and 140. They belong to hereditary lineages some of which claiming continuous transmission going back to the four founding masters of the Bon religion in Reb kong. This pattern of lay tantric practitioners gathering together in religious centres preserves an old Tibetan cultural pattern. According to the Bon history written by the Bon master and scholar Shar rdza bkra shis rgyal mtshan (Karmay 1975), the second king of Tibet Mu khri bstan po invited 108 Bon po from Zhang Zhung to spread Bon in Tibet and they established 37 religious centres. Before the development of the Bon monastic system following the founding of Sman ri monastery in Central Tibet in 1405 by Mnya med shes rab rgyal mtshan,[15] the main form of transmission of Bon doctrine was through such family lineages (*gdung brgyud*) and religious centres (Lhagyal 2000; Thar 2000, 2008). The most famous Bon family lineages are *bru*, *zhu, spa, rme'u* and *gshen*. The *gshen* lineage, which is still represented today, is thought to go back to Ston pa gshen rab; the other lineages stem from disciples of the famous 11th century Bon master Gshen chen klu dga (995–1035). Although communities of Bon householder priests exist in other areas of Qinghai province (Thar 2008) and in Tibetan cultural regions of Nepal, for instance in the village of Lubrag in Mustang (Ramble 1983, 1984), and the Yang ngal lineage in Dolpo (Snellgrove 1981), Reb kong is of particular interest as it includes both the Bon monastic and the old pattern of non monastic religious institutions together, each of which has an important ritual role in the community. Ritual that is carried out by practitioners in these two religious institutions plays a major role in forging the sense of what it is to be Bon po in Reb kong.

[14] An outline of the Sngags mang community in Reb kong can be found in Dhondup (2011).

[15] Mnya med shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356–1415) is an almost exact contemporary of Tsong kha pa (1357–1419) and is of equal importance in the Bon religion as Tsong kha pa is for the Dge lug pa. A brief biography and details concerning his contributions to the Bon religion can be found in Arguillère (2006).

The general historical trend in Tibetan culture has been for monastic forms of religious knowledge to dominate, and following the establishment of the Bon monasteries of G.yas ru dben sa kha and Sman ri in Central Tibet at the turn of the 15th century, this was the pattern that ensued for the Bon religion. In keeping with this pattern Bon brgya monastery is the preeminent Bon religious institution in Reb kong. A major question is to understand the extent to which these two institutions, that is to say Bon brgya monastery and the *gsas khang*, work together as one functional unit. That this is the case is demonstrated by the fact that the head of Bon brgya monastery, the reincarnate lama and renowned scholar Dge leg lun grub rgya mtsho, who is generally referred to as A lag Bon brgya, is also the head of the Reb kong *Bon mang*.

The notion that the *gsas khang* preserve an ancient form of Bon institution is preserved in the name. Monks at Bon brgya monastery told me that *gsas* is the Zhang Zhung word for deity, thus *gsas khang* corresponds in name if not function to the Tibetan *lha khang*. Each of the 15 *gsas khang* is situated in a specific Bon village but has an association with several others. In terms of their history and ritual activity the *gsas khang* are divided into four groups (see Table 1 and Map 7.1):

1. The Yar nang bon mang, consists of the two *gsas khang* closest to Bon gya monastery, the practitioners of which are descended from the famous Bon practitioner Khyung po bstan pa dar gyas. The Yar nang Bon mang comprises 7 villages, which amounts to a total number of around 366 villagers and 47 Tantric priests.
2. Stod phyogs Bon Mang, consists of five *gsas khang* in the central eastern area of the valley. In this cluster the three *gsas khang* to the north are connected with Grub chen 'khor los bsgyur ba'i rgyal po, one of the first masters to spread Bon in Reb kong; the two southern *gsas khang* are associated with Ye she tso gyal another founding master of Bon in Reb kong. The Stod phyogs bon mang comprises 164 villages, which consists of around 1100 villagers and 176 tantric priests.
3. The Smad phyogs bon mang group is situated to the north east of the valley and comprises five *gsas khang*. They are associated with the 15th century Bon master Rtog ldan ku bzang klong grol and his son Snang gsal lhun grub, who are descendants of Khyung po bstan pa dar gyas, the founder of the Yar nang Bon mang. This group includes 312 villages which amounts to a total number of around 1377 villagers and 307 priests.
4. Finally, in the north west of the valley there are the three *gsas khang* which comprise the snyan bzang bon mang group. This includes 13 villages, around 1280 villagers and 73 Tantric priests.



Fig. 7.1. Mag gsar gsas khang, Reb kong. Photo: Colin Millard, May 2010.

From this we can see the Reb kong Bon mang comprises a total of 577 tantric priests.[16]

The Gdong skam gsas khang provides an interesting case of the possible fluidity of identity amongst Tibetans in Reb kong . Of the 99 families situated here only 30 are now Bon po. The rest have converted to either the Dge lug pa or Rnying ma pa Buddhist sects. The *gsas khang* is now used by all three of these groups.

The ritual life of the Bon community operates on several levels. Collective rituals are performed frequently throughout the year at Bon brgya monastery for all the Bon community. Most of these rituals are part of the ritual cycles of various Bon *Yi dams* (tutelary deity). The village temples also perform several collective annual rituals hosted by one of the

[16] In Tsering Thar's article 'Bonpo Tantrics in Kokonor Area' (2008) he states that the *Bon mang* are collectively referred to as the 'one thousand nine hundred Bon mang of Reb kong who hold the Phur pa' (*Reb gong Bon mang phur thogs stong dang dgu brgya*). As this same name is also applied to the *sngags mang* of Reb kong (Dhondup 2011), it is not clear how the name can refer to both groups separately unless the name originally referred to both the Bon and Buddhist tantric priests together.

Table 1

Group	Gsas khang	Village	Number of People	Founder
Yar nang bon mang	1. Bon brgya gSang sngags dar rgyas gling	Bon brgya village	3 villages 36 families 140 people 21 priests	Descendants of the famous Khyung po bstan pa dar gyas
	2. Mag gsar g.yung drung bstan dar gling	Mag gsar village	4 villages 40 families 226 people 26 priests	
Stod phyogs bon mang	3. Theg chen bon ’khor lhun grub gling	Rgya mtsho dpal village	5 villages 54 families 326 people 27 priests	Seats of Grub chen ’khor los bsgyur ba’i rgyal po, one of first masters to spread Bon in Reb kong
	4. Gsang sngags rig ’dzin dar rgyas	Gad pa skya po village	3 villages 31 families 217 people 34 priests	
	5. Theg chen smin grol rgya mtsho gling	Gdong mgo village	1 village 44 families 310 people 22 priests	
	6. Rgyal bstan ye shes rgya mtsho gling	Ngo mo village	26 priests	Seats of Grub chen ye shes mtsho rgyal—Also one of first to spread bon in Reb kong.
	7. Rig ’dzin thugs rje byang chub gling	Gyang ri village	2 villages 34 families 240 people 67 priests	
Smad phyogs bon mang	8. Mdo sngags phun tshogs dar rgyas gling	Gling rgya village	3 villages 78 families 327 people 100 priests	In the 15th Century Rtogs ldan kun bzang klong grol and his son Snang gsal lhun grub were born here, they are the spiritual descendants of Grub chen khyung dkar tshang ba
	9. Kun ’dus g.yung drung ‘gyur med gling	Zho ’ong nyin tha village	2 villages 23 families 130 people 25 priests	
	10. Sgrub pa’i rgyal mtshan mi ’gyur gling	Dar grong village	1 village 20 families 180 people 27 priests	
	11. Khyung dkar rig ’dzin smin grol gling	Khyung bo thang village	2 villages 92 families 600 people 140 priests	
	12. Gsang sngags bdud ’dul lhun grub gling	Ddong skam village	4 villages 99 families (now only 30 Bonpo) 140 people 15 priests	
Snyan bzang bon mang	13. Gsang chen smon grol dpal ldan gling	Hor nag village	6 villages 50 families 300 people 28 priests	
	14. Rig ’dzin kun ’dus rnam rgyal gling	Stong che village	3 villages 66 families 420 people 23 priests	Stobs ldan dbang phyung has his throne here
	15. khyung dkar bstan pa rgya mtsho gling	Khyung bo la ga village	4 villages 88 families 560 people 22 priests	Very old. Date and founder remain unknown

village temples through a system of yearly rotation, these include Spring and Autumn rituals and rituals dedicated to various Bon Tantric deities including the two *yi dam*: Kun ’dus mkkha’ ’gro gsang gcod and Zhi khro. For these major ceremonies the *gsas khang* form into two groups, the Snyan bzang bon mang merge with the Smad phyogs bon mang, and the other two *Bon mang* unite to form the second group.

After the spring ritual the villagers invite the *Bon mang* into their homes to perform rituals of purification and prosperity. Each village temple also

has its own individual sequence of yearly rituals. In addition to the collective rituals the Bon tantric priests also perform rituals individually either for the development of their own spiritual practice or to cater to the needs of local people such as to cure sickness caused by spirits or create favourable conditions for new business ventures.

There is another layer of ritual performed in the community which is carried out by both the Bon villagers and the *Bon mang* together, this relates to the cult of local territorial deities. Each village is connected to a territorial deity which is represented symbolically by a ritual structure known as *la btsas*. The structure consists of a square base surmounted by numerous arrows and prayer flags. Each year the arrows and prayer flags of this structure are renewed in a ritual act of community identity which connects the village with its territorial ancestral deity. Karmay has carried out a number of studies of this ritual in various locations in A mdo and Central Tibet (1994a, 1994b, 1996, 1998a, 2000) in which he has analysed the ways this form of ritual practice has been intimately associated with community identity and forms of political structure in Tibet since ancient times. In A mdo, as was saw earlier in the A mdo Shar khog region, political organisation was structured according to tribal federations (*tsho ba*) which united groups of villages or tents in one area. Each federation had its own chief and social and political institutions, it was also connected to a monastery, and to an ancestral mountain deity. Due to the strong association between the mountain cult and Tibetan community identity the communist party banned the ritual in the 1960s and all *la btsas* were destroyed along with the traditional social and political organisation of the community. With the revitalisation of religious practice in the 1980s, people began to rebuild the *la btsas* in Reb kong. As the knowledge of how to make them was almost lost, A lag Bon brgya wrote a text on the subject and the *la btsas* in Reb kong are now made according to the instructions found in his text.

Bon brgya Monks and Sngags pa brtan pa

As I have mentioned, Bon brgya village was founded by Dbyings klong rin chen in the mid ninth century. Members of his family founded a hermitage there which eventually became Bon brgya monastery. Thus as a religious institution it has a long history, but its transformation into a monastery



Fig. 7.2. La btsas at Bon brgya Monastery. Photo: Colin Millard, May 2010.



Fig. 7.3. La btsas at Rtse khog Bon Monastery. Photo: Colin Millard, May 2010.

occurred only at the beginning of the 20th century. Since its establishment as a monastery it has had a precarious existence; it was damaged on two occasions by the army of the Muslim war lord Ma Bufang (1903–1975), finally to have been completely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Now it is flourishing, with 80 monks, a school of dialectics and a meditation school where the monks carry out 3 year retreats.

When I arrived in Bon brgya village in the summer 2010, A lag Bon brgya was not there, in his stead I interviewed two monks: Bstan dar who is from Rnga ba district and Yung drung bdud 'joms from Khams. They said that the tradition in the area amongst the Bon po is for the eldest son to look after the family businesses, and for one of the other sons to be sent to the monastery. As for the Bon *sngags pa* who make up the *bon mang*, some of them are members of family lineages, whilst for others it is matter of personal choice. They both stressed that the *sngags pa* have less practice to do than the monks. Also they take different vows. Mainly they focus on the practice of the Tantric deity of their temple.

The *sngags pa* perform rituals to benefit their communities either in the temple or in the person's home. In the short time that I was in Reb kong, I did not have the opportunity to interview any of the Bon *sngags*



Fig. 7.4. Bon brgya Monastery. Photo: Colin Millard, May 2010.

pa from Reb kong. However I spent some time with *sngags pa* Brtan pa, a Bon *sngags pa* who is also a famous Tibetan medicine practitioner[17] from the adjoining county of Rtse khog a short distance south of Reb kong. The countryside around Rtse khog is very different from the fertile mountainous river valley of Reb kong. It is situated in a vast plateau of high flat grassland; ideal Yak country. There is a funny Tibetan story about the founding of Rtse khog. The Chinese wanted to establish an administrative town in the area and they noticed a location that did not have any snow. Accordingly they built the town there. The Tibetans thought this was the worst location as the reason there was no snow there was because the strong winds had blown it all away.

When I met *sngags pa* Brtan pa he was 67 years of age. He did not come from a *sngags pa* family lineage or a medicine family lineage, but by his own effort he had become very well accomplished in both spheres of activity. He had gathered money from local Bon po to build a Bon temple

[17] I have discussed his contributions to Bon medicine elsewhere (Millard forthcoming).



Fig. 7.5. *Sngags pa* Brtan pa. Photo: Colin Millard, May 2010.

on an area of land about 30 minutes' drive outside Rtse khog town.[18] He told me that he had acquired the land in 1966 and had first lived there for 2 years in a tent. The temple was finally built in 1986. There are currently 33 monks connected with it and 22 Bon *sngags pa*. I say connected with it because when I went there I saw only about 6 or 7 people.

Sngags pa Brtan pa also has a house there, where his son was doing a 3 year retreat. He has another son who is a monk in Bon brgya monastery. Although he has now retired from medical practice he still does healing rituals for patients if the sickness has been diagnosed as caused by harmful spirits. He told me that he also does *sog mo* for patients, a form of divination by looking at the cracks that form in burnt animal shoulder blade bones. In his view the difference between a *sngags pa* and a monk, is to do with different sets of vows and practices. Monks concentrate on sutra teachings whereas *sngags pa* focus on secret mantra. He said these two lineages of teachings went back to Ston pa gshen rab who had these

[18] The monastery is called Rtse khog rdzong rtse chu grong rdal so nag bon dgon gshen bstan mdo sngags dar rgyas gling.

two kinds of disciples. He said that the dress and accoutrements of the *sngags pa* symbolise that the *sngags pa* is in an original unchanged condition, this is the significance of the long hair, the white clothes, and the skull cap bowl. What he is referring to here are the four natural conditions (*Ma bcos pa bzhi*) of the *sngags pa* (Thar 2008): first, to have 'natural hair like a weeping willow' (*skra ma bcos pa lcang lo*), the hair is braided when receiving tantric initiation by someone who has already received the lineage transmission; second, a natural container such as a skull cup (*snod ma bcos pa thod pa*); third, a natural white cloth (*gos ma bcos pa dkar po*); and fourth, a natural mind, that is to say to be in the condition of the nature of the mind. As I have mentioned *sngags pa* Brtan pa had retired from medical practice, though he did still have one student, a young monk from A mdo Shar khog. He now spends most of his time in meditation and writing an extensive commentary on the Zhang Zhung snyan rgyud rdzogs chen text.[19]

Conclusion: Religious Revival as Continuity or Discontinuity

A major question is the extent to which religious practice amongst the Bon community in Reb kong is a continuity of what occurred prior to the political upheavals following the incorporation of the area into the People's Republic of China. During the Cultural Revolution Bon brgya monastery and most of the village temples were destroyed. The policy reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping during Third Plenum of the Eleventh Chinese Communist Party Congress in 1978 in Beijing led in the 1980s to a Tibetan religious revival. A number of studies have been carried out of this religious revival amongst Tibetan communities in A mdo. Studies have been done on pilgrimage (Huber 2000b, 2006; Wenbin 1998; Buffetrille 1994) monastic revitalisation (Makley 1999; Kolas and Thowsen 2005) on religious dances (Schrempf 2000, 2006) and ritual (Epstein and Wenbin 1998; Nagano 1998; Buffetrille 2008); similar research has also been done in Central Tibet (Goldstein and Kapstein 1998). These studies have shown that the cultural revitalisation that has occurred has been far from straightforward; though some traditions have been revived, others have been adapted and some have been lost (Huber 2006). For example

[19] One of the most important Rdzogs chen texts in the Bon tradition, said to have an unbroken lineage going back to Bon masters in Zhang zhung (Reynolds 2005, Blezer 2009, Karmay 1998b).

in A mdo Shar khog, before the Cultural Revolution there were 30 Bon monasteries and a famous pilgrimage route at Shar dung ri ('snow conch mountain'). Since the 1980s only 13 Bon monasteries have been rebuilt and Shar dung ri mountain with its thousands of limestone karst terraced lakes is now a major tourist location for Chinese tourists. Consequently, the Tibetan have shifted their main pilgrimage site to a nearby sacred mountain *Bya dur ri*, 'bird cemetery mountain' (Huber 2000, 2006). In Reb kong, in the decade following the Cultural Revolution, Bon brgya monastery and all the Bon village temples were rebuilt and the religious and ritual life of the community was re-established. But the question of continuity, adaptation and loss, has yet still to be fully addressed.

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RITUAL AND PERFORMANCE IN CONTEMPORARY REB KONG

MONEY, BUTTER AND RELIGION: REMARKS ON PARTICIPATION IN THE LARGE-SCALE COLLECTIVE RITUALS OF THE REP KONG TANTRISTS

Nicolas Sihlé

Introduction

In his study of the rituals of Newar Buddhism, although he privileges other categories for his analysis, David Gellner emphasizes that "[t]he first and most important distinction for Newar Buddhists is that between obligatory and optional practices" (Gellner 1992: 135).[1] It has always struck me that this distinction seems much less prominent in Tibetan discourses; however, it is in no way absent. But what about the analytical purchase of this distinction? Robertson Smith's words, in an oft-quoted passage regarding the religions of antiquity, come to mind: "the ritual was obligatory and faith in the myth was at the discretion of the worshipper" (1889: 19). Reflecting on this statement (and on the religious-and-political institutions that Robertson Smith had in mind), it appears that the category of "ritual", or even of "collective ritual", is in all likelihood too broad to enable one to venture valid generalizations of that kind. We might therefore want to phrase our question in the following way: is the *optional character* of participation in certain types of collective rituals something "good to think with"?

In what follows I would like to examine a major type of (typically annual) collective ritual carried out in many parts of Amdo [A mdo][2] (northeast Tibet). Although one could point to a few somewhat similar gatherings in Tibetan monastic contexts,[3] the specialists considered here

[1] See also Gellner (1992: 136–137, figures 14 and 15), and compare with (1992: 6) for correspondences with the alternative set of categories privileged by Gellner at the analytical level.

[2] In order to make the reading of Tibetan terms easier for non-Tibetanists, I provide here simple, relatively standard phonetic transcriptions according to central Tibetan pronunciations (which might be more familiar to non-specialists than Amdo pronunciations), with standard transliteration in square brackets at the first occurrence. For Amdo terms not used in central Tibetan, I provide a transcription closer to the Amdo pronunciation.

[3] See for instance the famous Jang Günchö ['Jang dgun chos] or "Jang Winter dharma session" gatherings (named after their place of origin, Jang in Central Tibet). On the original gatherings in Jang, see: Anon. (2008/12/21) 'Jang dgun chos skor. *Mtsho sngon bod*

are tantrists (Buddhist or Bönpo non-monastic, householder religious specialists, most commonly called *ngakpa* [sngags pa] in Tibetan, and most often *xön* [dpon] in Amdo). These rituals are *supra-local* gatherings of religious specialists, who assemble for several days of tantric ritual practice (in other words, not small-scale, village-community-based rituals). Significantly, apart from a small number of holders of ritual functions—the vajra-master (*dorje-lopön* [rdo rje slob dpon]), the chant master (*umdze* [dbu mdzad]), one or several disciplinarians (*gekö* [dge bskos]) . . .—individual participation in these events is optional.

I would like to look here at an issue that seems to be only very rarely addressed: participation in these rituals being optional, according to what concerns do the religious specialists choose to take part or not? And what do these elements tell us about these specialists and for instance the possible constraints and tensions within which they operate?

The type of response I will be giving is, as current academic trends go, rather uncommon too—maybe because, far (or so one might think) from the exciting existential profundity or symbolic sophistication of things "religious" and "spiritual", or from the seemingly inherent "relevance" of (gender, postcolonial or other) political or power-centered analyses of religion, it may appear desperately unattractive or pedestrian, and thus not warranting scholarly attention. In effect, I will argue that one of the major factors bearing on many of these religious specialists' participation is the prospect of "money and butter", as people in Repkong sometimes put it: the prospect of receiving a share at the distributions of gifts/offerings (*gye* ['gyed]) and food that occur at some of these rituals. To call a cat a cat, we are talking here of a motivation of a primarily material, economic nature (which is not to dispute the presence of other layers of value and meaning in these items and their distribution). I recently told a young Amdo intellectual the theme of the present work I was engaged in, and (I admit, to my relief) his immediate reaction was an acknowledgement of relevance: "I see. Not religion according to its theological principles (*chö tsennyipa* [chos mtshan nyid pa]), but what goes on under the name of religion (*chö takpawa* [chos btag pa ba])." [This is probably as close as

skad lung 'phrin (Bod brgyud nang bstan section). URL (consulted April 2012): http://web.archive.org/web/20101203161011/http://www.qhtb.cn/buddhism/view.jsp?id=171. On recent gatherings in Eastern Tibet, see: Anon. (2011/07/18) Mdo khams kyi 'Jang dgun chos chen mo Li thang du 'tshogs pa. *Bod kyi bang chen* [*The Tibet Express*]. URL (consulted April 2012): http://www.tibetexpress.net/bo/home/2010-02-04-05-37-19/6174-2011-07-27-13-32-44.

it gets, in Tibetan, to Leach's distinction between "philosophical religion" and "practical religion" (1968).] "For us [Tibetans], he continued, one cannot write about this, but it's quite true, this going to rituals in order to get a share (Amdo: *ka len* [skal len])." So let us examine the place of this *getting a share*.

A last word to set the frame for the present chapter: for reasons both of space and of thematic unity, this discussion of the importance of gifts received will not examine the complex, quite different, and to some extent separate issues that emerge from the perspective of those who provide the gifts—the donors. Suffice it to say that those rituals that are associated with a master, *lama* [bla ma], often benefit from the latter's organization of a relatively steady financial sponsorship, which can take a number of forms. Additionally, the occurrence of one of these large-scale rituals may be seized occasionally as an opportunity for receiving merit and blessings by an individual donor, for instance on the occasion of death rites. This common structure of organized and occasional sponsorship means that participants in such rituals often know they can expect a certain amount of gifts, but that the outcome may be higher than expected on some occasions.

Methodology

How does one examine factors of participation in rituals? A two-pronged, primarily qualitative approach has been adopted here. At the aggregate level, one can attempt to interpret variations in levels of participation—either between different rituals, or between different occurrences of one given ritual—as resulting (in part, causalities being always complex) from certain changes in circumstances that have been observed, or mentioned by informants. In this approach, certain circumstances or factors are thus interpreted to be particularly significant, a key element in guiding one's selection and interpretation being here of course recurring themes in informants' discourses. At a more individual level, in-depth semi-directed interviews (informed by my own observation of the rituals and of the participants) enabled to explore a number of informants' views and personal histories of participation or non-participation; these have provided key qualitative elements of understanding.

It should however be kept in mind that inquiring about motivations for participation or non-participation in rituals may be in some ways a rather tricky business. Informants' comments on reasons for participation

may often omit "what goes without saying" (Bloch 1992), such as (to the people themselves) "obvious" religious considerations. More generally, we are dealing here of course to a large extent with *post hoc* rationalizations (1992: 128). More specifically, as Bell (1997: 167) reminds us, the ritual character of the activities (and, more broadly, what Bell terms "ritualization")

> gives people the sense that these activities do not need a lot of justification. They appear to address a very specific and obvious need, or have a sufficiently long history that in itself justifies them. Indeed, it is more common in most communities to need a good reason *not* to participate in ritual activities.

This being said, the large pool of my informants' comments on motivations, and especially those which came unsolicited, clearly do shed some light on the dynamics underlying the question of participation.

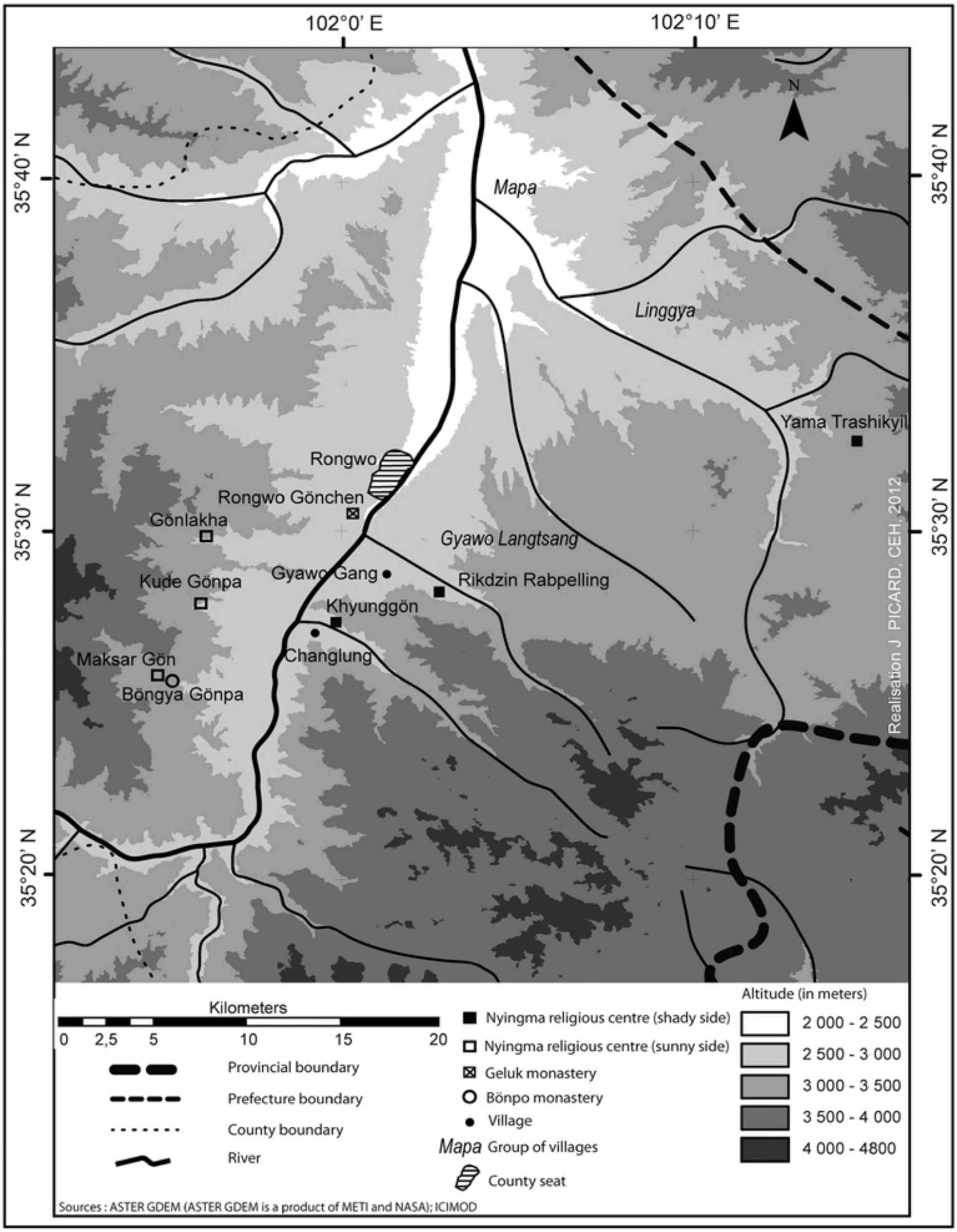
The Rituals and the Associated "Collectivities of Tantrists"

The (approximately maybe two thousand) tantrists of the Repkong [Reb kong, Reb gong] county in Eastern Amdo belong primarily, and in roughly comparable numbers, to one or the other of three ritual traditions (this is a simplification, but accurate enough for the purposes of this chapter): two Buddhist, more precisely Nyingma [Rnying ma] ones, and one Bönpo [Bon po]. The Bönpo tantrists are located in villages scattered throughout various parts of Repkong (see Thar 2008: 541–543, as well as Millard, in this volume). As for the two Nyingma traditions, they are present mainly each on one side of the main valley: communities practicing mostly the Minling [Smin (grol) gling] tradition on the (roughly eastern) "shady side" (*sip* [srib], Amdo: *hrip*), and communities associated with the Nyingtik [Snying thig] tradition on the opposite, western, "sunny side" (*nyin* [nyin]). Tantrists participate almost exclusively in rituals of their own traditions of training and initiation; practice is largely partitioned along these lines. These two territorially located traditions define thus quasi-exclusive collective identities, or (imagined) religious collectivities, known as the "collectivity of tantrists of the shady side", or *hrimta ngakmang* [srib lta sngags mang], and the "collectivity of tantrists of the sunny side", or *nyinta ngakmang* [nyin lta sngags mang]. These collectivities are associated with distinct histories of temple foundations, master lineages and ritual traditions.[4]

[4] For a brief introduction to this history, see Dhondup (2011: 47–49). See also the collection of historical materials edited by Lce nag tshang and Sgrol ma (2004).

The most well-known collective designation of Repkong tantrists however is simply *Repkong ngakmang* or, in full, *Repkong ngakmang phurtok tong dang gupgya* [Reb kong sngags mang phur thogs stong dang dgu brgya], "the Repkong collectivity of tantrists, the one thousand nine hundred ritual dagger holders". Legitimate use of, or association with, this prestigious designation is disputed among local stakeholders, and in particular between adherents of the two main Nyingma traditions. I will return elsewhere to the complex identity politics that unfold around this name; for the moment, suffice it to say that the early history of this name is associated with the local Minling tradition, but that many tantrists today (particularly among those with Nyingtik associations) prefer to see this designation as referring to all (Nyingma) tantrists of Repkong.

The (imagined) *ngakmang* collectivities of Repkong find their most visible expression in large collective rituals, generally known as *chötok* [chos thog] (the same term as the one for monastic "dharma sessions"), to which we now turn. There are approximately a dozen supra-local annual ritual gatherings of tantrists in Repkong. Two of the largest and most prominent rituals of the Buddhist tantrists are held in Khyunggön [Khyung dgon] temple and Gönlakha [Dgon la kha] monastery, on the "shady" and "sunny" sides respectively; on the "sunny" side also, somewhat further to the south, at Maksar [Mag gsar] temple, another comparable ritual takes place (see map 8.1). Other similar but smaller events are held in smaller areas, within the "shady" side in particular. Finally, one more recent, also very large collective ritual, known as the Shitro [Zhi khro] ("Peaceful and wrathful [deities]"), based on a very widely practiced ritual tradition, the Karling [Kar gling] Shitro, brings together tantrists from both sides of the valley. As a ritual initially instituted by personalities mostly with primary affiliations to the Minling tradition, its success in attracting participants with Nyingtik affiliations, who are traditionally trained in another Shitro tradition, has been somewhat modest. However, partly in order to overcome this kind of difficulty, its location has been devised to vary from year to year, following a five-year cycle of rotation within a fivefold territorial subdivision of Repkong. As for the (religiously more unified) Bönpo tantrists, their own four major annual ritual gatherings are organized along a similar pattern of rotation (Thar 2008: 543–544). All these rituals last typically four or five days, sometimes up to seven. Although they may contain some more spectacular elements like masked dances, processions and so forth, they consist primarily of protracted phases of chanting, interspersed with mantra recitation.



Map 8.1. Major Nyingma religious centers of Repkong.

Factors Influencing the Tantrists' Participation

1. *Collective Rituals as Preeminent Religious Institutions*

What do these ritual gatherings mean for the tantrists? The rituals do not aim in any central way at achieving worldly benefits; they are preeminent occasions of tantric practice, centered on a given high tutelary deity: Avalokiteśvara in the major Khyunggön ritual (popularly known as the Khyunggön Mani Drupchen [Ma ṇi sgrub chen], the "Great accomplishment of Mani [pills]"), Phurwa [Phur pa] in Gönlakha, etc. The size of the gatherings, their annual character, the prestigious locations, in some cases the presence of a master, all these factors contribute to make them some of the most, if not often the most, important ritual events of the year for the participants. In particular for strongly religious-minded practitioners, there are clearly (sometimes powerful) religious motivations at play here.

Of course, the Repkong tantrists do not constitute a homogenous set of people, and thus the question of what participation in these rituals mean for "them" requires some comments. Beyond distinctions in terms of the different ritual traditions (for instance Minling vs. Nyingtik) in which they are trained, the degree and type of training obtained (the spectrum is vast, from very modest levels to virtuoso practices such as *tsalung* [rtsa rlung] tantric yoga), a basic, major criterion that should be kept in mind is that of age. Older tantrists are probably freer than others to take part in prolonged ritual gatherings. Young men already trained in tantric ritual may hesitate to participate in some particularly demanding rituals (with long daily sessions of chanting starting already at dawn, if not earlier), rituals colloquially known as the "big" ritual gatherings (*chötok*) of the Repkong collectivity of tantrists, such as the Shitro for instance. Younger boys at various stages of literacy and training are yet another, distinct section of the age range; we will see that their participation in the large supra-local rituals has become a disputed issue. (This may be related, at least in part, to the fact that there is generally no established rite of passage or other clear marker of one's formally becoming a tantrist. Rather, it is a question of gradual transition into a body of ritual practices, religious knowledge and commitments, and bodily habitus—in particular, keeping one's hair long.)

We should also note here that the distinction between obligatory and optional ritual practices is not absolute. Thus a number of tantrists state that once having started to take part in one of these large annual rituals, one feels some sense of obligation, with regard to one's relationship

to the presiding master, to return thereafter on a yearly basis. This was expressed in particular by tantrists affiliated to Gönlakha; the master of that community, Alak Namkha [A lags Nam mkha'], is a senior, rather austere and widely respected personality, who imposes a strict discipline on the yearly Phurwa ritual gathering.

Furthermore, in some particular cases, although individual participation remains optional, there may also be collective responsibilities involved. Thus the tantrists of Changlung [Spyang lung] village, situated at the foot of the slope on which Khyunggön temple is built, are collectively obligated to prepare the *maṇḍala* and the ritual cakes, *torma* [gtor ma], for the major Khyunggön ritual. As the community counts some 25 active tantrists—more than twice the number needed for that work—participation in the rituals is technically not an absolute necessity for each one; but the ratio of participants in the ritual among the Changlung tantrists does tend to be very high.

Of course, I am labeling certain factors or motivations as "religious" (or "economic", etc.) for the sake of convenience; there are obviously no separate, hermetically sealed-off domains to be distinguished. Thus, underlying some tantrists' strong sense of religious commitment to participate annually in a given ritual, one finds also an attachment to that ritual tradition that is of the order of an historical, or even political consciousness. This was the case, for instance, in the 1980s, in the period of religious liberalization that followed the two decades of Maoist attempts to eradicate religion; other lines of political tension are however present as well. Many Repkong tantrists recall that, in the 1940s, the coalition of prominent tantrists, Nyingma lamas and local chiefs who attempted to institute the large Shitro ritual, the first ritual that was to bring together Nyingma tantrists from all parts of Repkong, and in particular from both the Minling and the Nyingtik traditions that were present in the valley, faced powerful opposition by the locally hegemonic Geluk [Dge lugs] establishment, which was centered on the large Rongwo Gönchen [Rong bo dgon chen] monastery and its powerful incarnation lineages, and was closely associated with the old ruling family of the Repkong *nangso* [nang so] chiefs.[5] The Geluk opposition could be surmounted only, the story goes, by a strategic (albeit, on the face of it, rather unlikely) alliance, in which a Nyingma master managed to secure the backing of the powerful Muslim warlord

[5] For some historical background to this configuration of political and religious power, see Tsering (2011) and Dhondup (2011: 37–46).

Ma Bufang in Xining—on the basis of the principle of freedom of religious activity, to which Ma Bufang himself also subscribed.[6] Two tantrists from Changlung village took a leading part in these early efforts to establish the Shitro ritual; today, some young Changlung tantrists describe their own yearly participation as virtually a moral obligation, considering the magnitude of the efforts that were deployed for the founding of this key collective ritual.

2. *The Economic Implications of Ritual Participation*

Primarily religious considerations such as those mentioned so far are however insufficient to understand fully the dynamics of ritual participation. For one, of course, the general contingencies of life, such as an individual tantrist's own health issues, or similar events within his family circle, may well impede, occasionally or more durably, his taking part in long ritual gatherings at some distance from his own village. Religious obligations may also work *against* his participation in a given supra-local ritual, as when a tantrist is solicited at the same time for funerary rituals in his own village.

Participation is also influenced however by a whole range of other factors and, in particular, by economic considerations. Tantrists, as householders, are most often key income providers for their households, and their engaging (sometimes repeatedly throughout the year) in several-days-long collective rituals has implications for the domestic economy. A rather extreme case I know is that of one highly motivated tantrist of Changchup [Byang chub] village, in his forties, who devotes roughly one hundred days per year to village and supra-local ritual gatherings. Additionally, he is also very active, and very much in demand, as a provider of domestic ritual services. For this he travels even occasionally (like a number of other Repkong tantrists) to areas situated at quite some distance from Repkong county. In this case, a major part of the household's secular economic activities are thus taken care of by his wife, young married daughter and son-in-law—something that may not be readily feasible in all households.

For most Repkong households, a yearly economic activity of crucial importance is the caterpillar-fungus (*ophiocordyceps sinensis*) harvest. The date of the great Shitro ritual was modified in recent years in order

[6] I will return to this important moment in the 20th century history of the Repkong tantrists in a future work.

to accommodate this activity. Other economic schedules, agricultural or other, may also come into conflict with fixed annual rituals. For instance, a number of tantrists visit their lay patrons in neighboring areas in order to provide them with ritual services on a roughly annual basis—with slight shifts in timing depending on other factors that are not always fully predictable. In some cases these trips may take up to one or even several months. These commitments, more lucrative but religiously less valued (if not ethically problematic) than the participation in collective rituals, may however remain the priority for many of those tantrists who find themselves faced with this choice.

In the absence of such major conflicts in the organization of one's activities, such as in periods of low-intensity economic activity or even relative inactivity, tantrists may still weigh their participation in a supra-local ritual gathering in part according to its economic cost or benefit, in particular if the ritual is held at some distance from their own village. With the development of paved roads and motor transportation in recent decades, travel to the ritual venue has become quicker, but, for all those who cannot use the typical household's only motorbike on such an occasion, and have to rely on taxis and the like, it comes with a new cost.

A major factor in such calculations is the expectation (for most of those rituals) of a distribution among all participants, during the event, of daily lumps of butter (called *marka* [mar skal], "share of butter") and, most importantly, of a certain amount of gifts (*gye*), primarily in the form of money, sometimes along with bricks of tea for instance. Depending on the particular supra-local ritual considered, the total money given as *gye* (whether by a single or by several patrons) can range from modest amounts like twenty or so yuan (approx. 2 euros) per officiant—a common figure at the major Khyunggön ritual—to considerably larger sums, reaching for instance up to 700–800 yuan (approx. 80 euros) at some occurrences of the two largest Bönpo rituals, popularly known as the Spring and Autumn rituals (Amdo: Shiche [Dpyid chos], Tönche [Ston chos]). These latter figures are all the more remarkable that these Bönpo rituals are typically very large gatherings, with often several hundred persons receiving a share.

These distributions are strongly egalitarian. With the exception of the *lama*, who typically receives three shares, and the ritual functionaries like the chant-master (*umdze*), who receive two, all participants receive exactly the same amounts of money and butter (see the careful weighing on Fig. 8.1). This includes those who are not officiating, but active as cooks (*chama* [ja ma]) or stewards/managers (*k'anggowa* [kha 'go ba])



Fig. 8.1. The shares of butter (*marka*) are carefully weighed in the kitchen of Khyunggön temple. Photo: Nicolas Sihlé, 2011.

for the event, as well as of course all those who are present in the rows of the assembly hall, from the youngest beginner to the oldest, most experienced and most powerful practitioner. More remarkably still, in some contexts, such as in the large Bönpo ritual gatherings, even young, completely untrained sons of tantrists received (until just a few years ago) the same amounts as the adult practitioners, as long as they were sitting in the row. The master of the Repkong Bönpo community, Alak Böngya (Amdo: Wöngya [Bon brgya]), recently changed the rules, however: the qualified tantrists and the other participants now sit in two different groups, and the latter receive shares that are only one third of what is given to a tantrist.

We may note in passing that this generally very egalitarian mode of distribution has methodological implications. How do informants actually know how many religious specialists participated in a ritual gathering? The main answer is: through the counts that accompany the distribution of gifts (*gye*); a given sum must first be broken down into the correct number of equal shares. The master of discipline (*gekö*), who is often in charge of the counts, or the organizers, who often prepare and distribute the actual shares, are in this respect key informants. However,

it is ultimately on the number of *shares* (as dignitaries and functionaries receive more than one), rather than the number of persons, that they focus concretely. Thus, when inquiring about the number of religious specialists participating in a large ritual, the information one receives may be slightly inflated (as already pointed out in a similar context by Schram 1957: 55): the figures provided tend to represent shares, and furthermore typically include cooks, organizers and the like, who may not necessarily be tantrists themselves. Finally, even after taking this last element into account, one still needs to proceed with caution, as the line between religious specialists and young boys at initial stages of their training, or even lay boys and men who are sitting in the row (sometimes wearing a wig of fake long hair) simply in order to receive a share, can be unclear. At some of the large Bönpo gatherings, the number of ritually non-qualified participants is comparable to the number of actual tantrists.

It is important to stress that the size of a religious event, as measured for instance by the number of specialists attending, is a matter of interest for those involved in the event, beyond the technical necessity of counting heads and shares. In Tibetan religious culture, and in particular in the ritual practice, large figures are important: one could talk here of a "culture of large numbers". Tibetan ritual practice often takes an accumulative character, and comments about the magnitude of religious benefits that are produced at such an event often suggest some sort of correlation with the event's size, be it its length, the number of iterations of important ritual sequences, the number of officiants, etc. Thus the attendance figures at the tantrists' large supra-local rituals definitely matter in local understandings.

We can now return to the issue of the factors influencing participation in the supra-local ritual gatherings. In discussions about participation numbers and current trends in such matters, tantrists often spontaneously identify "money and butter" or, more precisely, the usual level of distribution of monetary gifts at a given ritual as a key factor in potential participants' motivations—at least for a sizable proportion of the tantrists. (It is always acknowledged that a number of others are driven primarily by strong religious motivations.) Many tantrists in their thirties and above mention with a smile that, in their youth, it was the prospect of "getting a share" that drew them to the rituals.

On the whole, one can thus say that, for many tantrists, beside the religious considerations that were briefly discussed above (not to mention of course the general contingencies of life), a major concern, when weighing their decision to take part or not in a given supra-local ritual, is the

balance between the income that they might derive from attending and the expenses they would incur. This does not exhaust the range of relevant factors; for instance, tantrists also mention occasionally sociability issues, such as changes in the atmosphere among the participants. The previous formulation however summarizes quite accurately the data already presented above, and encapsulates the preeminent factors that emerge from the Repkong tantrists' discourse. The last section of this article will provide some further ethnographic flesh for this discussion, by focusing on one phenomenon, the striking decline in participation at the major Khyunggön ritual (the Khyunggön Mani Drupchen), from the mid-1980s to the present.

Interpreting the Khyunggön Case

1. *Comparisons between Rituals*

As I was boarding a plane at Xining airport, at the close of three months of fieldwork in Repkong, in early 2011, I immediately noticed a tall, well-dressed tantrist (with the unmistakable long hair tied around his head) who was taking the same plane as I. We had a stopover before reaching Guangzhou, and I took the opportunity to strike up a conversation with him. He happened to be from Repkong. As he inquired about the theme of my research, I mentioned as an example the issue of the decline of the participation in the Khyunggön Mani Drupchen. The tantrists taking part had numbered five hundred or more in the heyday of the 1980s, but were now down to a mere fifty or so active participants in 2011. What could explain this radical drop in the numbers?

The answer was easy, my interlocutor told me in a confident tone. He gave me a lengthy explanation, which basically amounted to suggesting that it all came down to (if I may rephrase somewhat his more abrupt formulation) differences in the legitimacy and qualities of the lamas associated with a given ritual. He himself, it should be mentioned, was the disciple of two local masters of the "sunny" side of the valley, Alak Maksar and Alak Namkha; and a son of Alak Maksar had been (and still was) considered by some to be the true incarnation of the previous Alak Khyunggön. The young man who was designated instead (the son of another, well-connected local master) ended up straying somewhat from the typical path of a young incarnate master—something that is not uncommon in the present-day political circumstances. He may be described as a controversial figure, although many of the Khyunggön-affiliated tantrists

remain staunchly loyal to their master. Actually, the words of guidance that he brought at the 2011 Mani Drupchen left a number of the attending tantrists with the feeling that things were taking a positive turn.

If one compares the decline of participation at the Khyunggön ritual with the relatively stable participation, roughly of the order of two to three hundred tantrists according to the figures I was given, at the large Gönlakha and Maksar rituals, then my interlocutor maybe had a point (it should be noted that he is not the only one, at least among Nyingtik-affiliated tantrists, to hold such a discourse). The same thing holds probably if we compare the Khyunggön ritual with the Bönpo Spring and Autumn rituals, where the participation figures are typically (and consistently) even higher.

As an aside, it should be emphasized that local discourses comparing these major rituals do not focus exclusively on this primarily quantitative dimension; they also address for instance more qualitative aspects, such as the quality of the discipline maintained at these rituals. In this respect, the large Shitro ritual, which since the 1980s has not been associated with any master, and is managed by a council of tantrist elders from each of the participating communities, is sometimes described as somewhat lacking in discipline. By contrast, the large Phurwa ritual gathering at Gönlakha, which is held under the strict guidance of Alak Namkha, is reputed, at least among tantrists and laity affiliated with Gönlakha, for the quality of its discipline.

Thus the presence and the qualities of a master definitely have an impact on the rituals under discussion. However, they remain one (significant) factor among others; as we have already noted, a number of other elements also come into play, for instance economic considerations. Thus the Shitro ritual, although devoid of the potentially centripetal force that the presence of a master can represent, is still marked by a relatively substantial level of participation (albeit with variations, possibly due in part to the unequal accessibility of the successive locations of the ritual). When compared to the Khyunggön Mani Drupchen, the larger attendance at the Shitro tends to be explained with reference to the different levels of *gye* gifts: often twenty yuan or so per person at the former, but generally one hundred or more at the latter.

Importantly for the analysis, it should be noted that these various factors are not always independent. Thus the substantial, and occasionally very high, levels of patronage seen at the large Bönpo rituals are not to be understood without reference to the strong prestige of the head lama

of the Repkong Bönpo community, Alak Böngya.[7] Similarly, the qualities of the master and of the discipline at the Gönlakha ritual are probably not unrelated to the appeal this ritual has for lay donors, and thus to the amounts of money that are given as *gye*. Whereas at Khyunggön the master provides a modest yearly sponsorship through an endowment he has established, and other donors are rare, currently, for the Gönlakha ritual, the would-be patrons are many, and in order to be selected one needs to submit one's request three to five years in advance.[8]

Thus the economic motivation that individual discourses often highlight as an important factor in many tantrists' decision to participate or not in a given ritual clearly plays an important part. The comparative comments offered by my informants suggest however that the economic dimension may also in a number of cases be intimately and complexly related to matters of prestige and perceived qualities of the masters and the rituals they oversee and support. The comparative angle is enlightening, but also has its limits, as we are comparing, ultimately, complex socio-ritual institutions and dynamics characterized by very particular, distinctive histories. We thus turn, finally, to the Khyunggön Mani Drupchen itself, in an attempt to understand the decline in participation in the light of the ritual's own recent history.

2. *The Vicissitudes of the Khyunggön Mani Drupchen*

After two long decades in which most temples were destroyed and all religious practice was outlawed, the period of religious liberalization that was ushered in around 1980 was marked by much religious enthusiasm. The Khyunggön temple was actually rebuilt twice in that period. The first time, it proved too small for the several hundreds of tantrists who were gathering for the great Mani Drupchen ritual: the assembly hall, *dukhang* ['du khang], was full, and the younger tantrists had to take place on the flat section of the roof, exposed to the often biting cold of the first lunar

[7] See for instance Karmay (2000: 383, 395), Thar (2008: 546), "Liam" (2008/08/12) Skyabs rje bla ma Bon brgya Dge legs lhun grub rgya mtsho. *Reb gong Bon mang dra tshigs [Repkong Bön collectivity web]*. URL (consulted April 2012): http://www.rgbm123.com/about/125/, and Bon brgya (2008/04/25) Skyabs rje bla ma Bon brgya Dge legs lhun grub rgya mtsho'i rang rnam. *Reb gong Bon mang dra tshigs*. URL (consulted April 2012): http://www.rgbm123.com/history/46/.

[8] Humchen Chenaktsang [Hūṃ chen Lce nag tshang], personal communication (April 2011).

month. The Geluk *lama* Alak Mentsang [Sman tshang], whose son (born 1986) was recognized as the reincarnation of the previous Alak Khyunggön, decided to rebuild the temple on a grander scale, and in the meanwhile, for a few years, the Mani Drupchen was held in the tantric temple, *ngakkhang* [sngags khang], of Changlung village, at the foot of the slope on which Khyunggön lies. Here also, only a fraction of the participants in the Mani Drupchen could take place in the temple, and so the temple courtyard was transformed into a large tent in order for the ritual to be held in proper conditions.

Compared to today, roads were bad at that time, the tantrists recall. But the tantrists' faith was strong, as they say, and they would put their texts in saddlebags and come on their mules. There were also, at least initially, many donors, and generous distributions of money and butter. At some point, it was even decided that the *gye* distributions should not go beyond a certain limit. But then gradually the number of donors diminished—probably part of a more widespread phenomenon, that resulted from the increase in the numbers of monastic and other religious institutions and individuals that were depending on lay patronage (see for instance Caple 2011: 109, who also cites Makley 2007: 260).

For many years, Alak Pema Tumbo [Pad ma gtum po] (1933–2009), a Golok [Mgo log] master who had formally recognized the young Alak Khyunggön, took up the role of main donor for the Mani Drupchen.[9] This was interrupted however by a conflict that seems to have been sparked off by a lack of transparency in how the money sent by the Golok master was managed at Khyunggön; eventually, Alak Khyunggön took over as the main donor himself, with the support of the nomadic community in which he was born. There were a few special years in which participation is said to have peaked at more than one thousand tantrists, such as when Alak Khyunggön was enthroned or, years later, when Alak Pema Tumbo gave an initiation on the occasion of the great ritual. But on the whole, gradually the numbers of participants started dwindling, and soon the large, rebuilt Khyunggön temple started feeling too big. A motorable road was recently completed all the way up to the temple, but now only a few people come, observed one of the elder Changlung tantrists, smiling a bit sadly at the irony of the situation.

9 On Alak Pema Tumbo, also known as Orgyen Kusum Lingpa [O rgyan sku gsum gling pa], see Terrone (2010: 122, 146–152).

The main explanation offered by my informants was the stagnation of the level of *gye* gifts, in a general context of increasing cost of living. At twenty or so yuan, this sum does not even adequately cover the cost of transportation for those tantrists coming from the more distant villages of the northern, lower part of Repkong. Even 52 yuan, the level reached in 2011, is not much, considering the current cost of things, commented an elderly master of discipline in a discussion we held on the last day of the ritual. And thus no-one is really surprised to see that the Mapa [Smad pa] and Linggya (Amdo: Langgya [Gling rgyal]) groups of villages of lower Repkong, although known for their substantial numbers of tantrists, are much less represented nowadays at the Khyunggön event. Even the much closer Gyawo Langtsang [Rgyal po rlangs tshang] group of villages, also known for its large numbers of tantrists, was only meagerly represented in 2011. The main factor behind these developments is identified, succinctly, as "the money and the butter".

Two other, more minor factors mentioned by my informants are not as primarily economic in nature; they are about tastes and pleasure. Like the preceding elements, however, they contribute to providing a decidedly more earthly, or, to use Trainor's term, "rematerialized", picture of (Tibetan) Buddhist practice.[10] The flour used to bake bread (the staple of Repkong diet) is said to be not as good in the Yarnang [Yar nang] or upper part of Repkong, to which Changlung belongs, as in the lower areas of Mapa and Linggya. A number of years ago, the Mapa and Linggya tantrists complained about the bread they were being given at the Khyunggön ritual. As they constitute together a very large and influential group, eventually the principle of distributing bread for the meals was abandoned. Now all tantrists must come with their own bread. However, a number of tantrists are now complaining about the extra effort and expense to come from distant villages with enough bread for several days, and this too is seen as one of the reasons for the gradual decline in participation.

The other factor is meat. Following strong recommendations regarding the abstention from, or reduction of, meat consumption by the Dalai Lama in 2006, a number of religious centers throughout Amdo and other Tibetan areas abolished the consumption of meat during religious assemblies. The tantrists assembled in Khyunggön debated the issue and decided to follow suit. However today, in hindsight, it seems clear to a number of my interlocutors that the absence of meat from the great

10 See Trainor (1997).

ritual gathering, which takes place in the first month of the Amdo Tibetan year (a period otherwise marked by much feasting, which is virtually synonymous with the enjoyment of meat), has definitely reduced the attractiveness of the ritual for many tantrists. Thus this also is most probably contributing to the current drop in participation numbers.

The very earthly picture of tantrists' motivations that emerges (primarily from Khyunggön-affiliated informants' discourses) in this section needs of course to be tempered and contextualized by the wider range of considerations discussed in the preceding sections. Taken all together, these elements are starting to give us a more convincingly complex account, in which we sense the multiplicity of factors that bear on a decision to devote (or not) five or even seven days in a row to a long ritual gathering. The more earthly, and in particular the economic, dimension highlighted in this discussion provides, I believe, a welcome corrective or balance to certain current trends in academic (and other) discourses on Tibetan religion. The present analysis of one Tibetan case also contributes to suggesting a more accurate view of the complex dynamics that may underlie optional collective rituals. As a way of closing off the analysis on a glimpse of dynamics unfolding in the present moment, a last point, pertaining to one of the most recent changes, may finally be adduced.

3. *Generational Dynamics and Socialization into Ritual Practice*

In a more sociological vein than most of the elements presented above, it should be mentioned that the *institutional* conditions of the Khyunggön Mani Drupchen (and other such large rituals) have also changed. The question of whether boys still at their very early stages of religious training, or even yet younger, should be allowed to take place with their elders at the major rituals (or even to run and romp around in the temples during these events) has recently been discussed, both in Buddhist and Bönpo circles. As we have seen, in the Bönpo case the master Alak Böngya decided a few years ago to separate the untrained youngsters from the properly qualified practitioners; for instance, the latter officiate inside the temple, but the former may now have to take place outside, and the shares they receive in the *gye* distributions are no longer the same. (This last stipulation is not to everyone's liking; quite interestingly, even some of the qualified tantrists express here some disagreement, for reasons that will need to be examined elsewhere, in a fuller discussion of the gift dynamics.)

Somewhat similarly, in the case of the Khyunggön ritual, in 2010 Alak Khyunggön decided to impose more rigorous practice conditions, and

to forbid the children from entering the temple during the ritual. This impacted immediately the level of attendance at the ritual in two ways: in 2011, there were hardly any more children to be seen; furthermore, as some of my informants pointed out, some of the elderly, less vigorous tantrists, who used to come with a young helper from their family, might have decided to abstain from participating in the context of the young master's new rule. But the most crucial implications probably lie elsewhere.

A highly respected elderly tantrist from Gyawo Gang [Rgyal po Sgang] village is said to have voiced his strong regrets about the master's decision. He himself had first come to Khyunggön "on the back of his father" (meaning, at a very young age). By coming there repeatedly, and receiving a share of butter, year after year, the ritual had become a part of him, like a smell that impregnates something. He had grown to like the moment when it was time to set off for the Mani Drupchen. He also had arguments on traditional religious grounds: all beings, starting from the lowliest insects, when entering the great Khyunggön temple, are said to enter into the presence of Avalokiteśvara (a widespread notion in Repkong); thus the children should not be shooed out, even when they are noisy. Finally, using religious imagery to convey his (sociologically astute) concern, he added that this decision meant the "loss of the accomplishments (*ngödrup* [dngos grub])" of the ritual. In effect, the Mani Drupchen is centered on the production of empowered pills (*Mani rilbu* [Ma ṇi ril bu]), which are the "accomplishments" (*ngödrup*) of the ritual; the pills are kept throughout the ritual at the heart of the *maṇḍala*, and protected with utmost care. (The concern of preventing the "loss of the accomplishments" is a common notion in tantric practice.) The banning of the children, for the old Gyawo Gang tantrist, severed the link with the upcoming generation, and therefore boded ill for future participation, and thus for the very future of the great ritual itself. The decision was going to impact an important process of socialization of the young tantrists into ritual practice—a process which had (along with other factors, as we have seen) contributed for many generations to make optional, long, complex textual in a cold temple, attractive to young minds.

Last Words of Conclusion

Here again, we realize that the material dimension of the distributions of money and butter blend at times almost seamlessly into other aspects of social institutions. These distributions of valuable substances confirm

the recipients' legitimate belonging to a group. They generate recognition, pleasure, and contribute to the shaping of a habitus, to the socialization of boys into a demanding form of cultic practice.

A last word of interpretation may be ventured here. Throughout the larger part of this chapter, devoted to motivations for participation in large-scale rituals of worship of high tantric deities, it is in particular the importance of economic concerns that has been highlighted—a dimension that all too often may disappear from academic analyses of Tibetan religious forms. I would suggest that there is a larger coherence to be found here, which explains in part this importance of the economic dimension that emerges from these Repkong voices. The religious specialists that we see here operating in a field with strong religious but also very salient, concrete economic determinations are tantrists. They are religious specialists, but (as opposed to the paradigmatic Buddhist specialists, the monks) they are also householders. They are figures of in-betweenness: at the same time men of Buddhist/Bönpo religion (a domain in many ways connoted by a world-rejecting orientation) and men of the world, with worldly, family obligations.[11] Seen from this angle, the importance of the money and the butter may begin to appear more coherent and less dissonant than at the outset of this examination.

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[11] See Sihlé (forthcoming).

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REB KONG'S *KLU ROL* AND THE POLITICS OF PRESENCE: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Charlene Makley

Introduction

In this chapter, I draw on my fieldwork on the annual harvest festival in Reb kong (Tib. *Klu rol*), and in particular a major conflict in 2006 over the legitimacy of a medium in Skyes ma village,[1] to reflect on the methodological implications of research on this valley-wide institution in the context of the massive changes brought with the state-led Great Develop the West campaign (2000). I ask what difference it makes to consider the festival in an irreducibly historical framework versus more prevalent structural-functionalist approaches that consider it as primarily a means for achieving village unity and prosperity. In this light, I argue, we have to develop a pan-regional ethnohistory that can account for the politics and ambivalent dialogics of divine presence among Tibetans and their interlocutors in Reb kong.

Reb kong's central valley floor (now administered as Longwu town, pop. ~23,294) is the seat of the centuries-old Tibetan Buddhist monastery of Rong bo, erstwhile ruler of the region, as well as the seat of both Huangnan Tibetan autonomous prefecture (estab. 1952) and Tongren county (estab. 1928). Skyes ma village in the 2000s was one of the wealthiest, most central and rapidly urbanizing Tibetan villages in the valley with over 2000 residents and 300 households. Like other major centers in the Sino-Tibetan frontier zone, Reb kong was incorporated into the People's Republic of China under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949. A military crackdown on Tibetan resistance to collectivization in the 1950s led to the arrest and imprisonment of most monks and lamas and the closure of most temples and monasteries.

Since the 1980s post-Mao reforms, Tibetans in Reb kong have vigorously revived once-banned Buddhist and lay ritual practices, and Skyes ma village led the way in reviving its 3-day lay harvest festival, called

[1] Given the ongoing political sensitivity of these issues, all village names and names of people here are pseudonyms.

Klu rol (lit. "entertainment for the Nagas"), to new splendor.[2] In the 2000s, as before, the festival was staged just before harvest season, when oil-seed and barley crops were supposed to be ripening in farmers' fields. It consisted of all-day sequences of dances, repeated three times in as many days, in which men and women were recruited to perform as ideal village subjects. The dances in turn were orchestrated and supervised under the watchful eyes of a committee of elders and the village mediums, whose bodies hosted the villages' main mountain deities. The performances included offerings to *klu* or underground water spirits, but they were most importantly sets of communal prayers and offerings to the mountain deities, who act as villages' principle mundane protectors and guarantors of strength, fortune and prosperity.

I in fact came to the study of *Klu rol* via the "back door". As part of a new project, I was conducting research on what I called "dilemmas of development" among Tibetans in Reb kong in the first half of the 2000s. I was trying to understand the impact there of the Great Develop the West campaign (Ch. Xibu Da Kaifa) launched by central leaders in 2000. My study was a broad-reaching inquiry into how local Tibetans were engaging with various development projects under the auspices of a wide variety of competing outside authorities and funding agencies. By then, Reb kong was a crucible of development politics. I counted at least 15 different countries' projects, including a wide variety of organizations operating in the region: lone foreigner liaisons, embassies, foreign and overseas Chinese and Tibetan NGOs, state bureaus and GONGOs, private foundations, as well as various Buddhist patronage communities. In that context, state officials in Reb kong took the Tibetan "culture industry" (Ch. *wenhua chanye*), with the "folk culture" (Ch. *minsu wenhua*) of *Klu rol* as a cornerstone of the Reb kong tourism brand, to be the driving force for the region's modernizing and "civilizing" development.[3] Thus in the 2000s,

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2 Nagas (Tib. *klu*) are ancient serpent-demons who control underground water sources. Some Reb kong villagers, as well as local and foreign scholars, argue that the festival's name is actually the homonymic *glu rol*, meaning 'music and entertainment'. However, most scholars and elders from Skyes ma village I spoke to insisted the name was *klu rol*. To them, that term more accurately described the nature of the event as an offering to deities.

3 Reb kong opened to foreign visitors for the first time since 1949 in 1989. Prefecture-led tourism and culture industry development efforts, including efforts to expand and professionalize Tibetan Buddhist art production, began in earnest in 2001 with the launch of *Xibu Da Kaifa*.

Reb kong's *Klu rol* was so objectified and touristed a festival that I was not interested in researching it.

Yet, in part driven by this commodification process, there has been a spate of academic research on *Klu rol* beginning in the mid-90s, but picking up momentum into the mid-2000s. Studies have focused mostly on individual villages' festival traditions and have been carried out by foreigners, local and nonlocal Tibetan scholars, and in collaborations between foreign researchers and local Tibetan scholars and officials.[4] My student and research assistant was from Skyes ma, which was the central village of urbanizing Longwu town, and former collective owner of most of the central land on the valley floor. He drew me in through his own research on *Klu rol* and his fascination with a recent conflict in Skyes ma over the authenticity of the village's main deity medium (*lha pa*), whom I call Rdo rje.

The Conflict

At Skyes ma's 2005 *Klu rol* festival, villagers had been shocked when Rdo rje, entranced as the deity Bya khyung (Se gu bya khyung; A mdo pronunciation: 'Sha chong'), brutally and very publicly evicted the group of prominent elders who had unprecedentedly organized the festival that year without consulting the deity. Rdo rje's Bya khyung then appointed a group of Rdo rje's supporters instead. The evicted elders, along with village Party Secretary Tshe ring, then publicly questioned Rdo rje's authenticity as a deity medium, thus raising doubts as to the legitimacy of his actions on behalf of the village. "What have we done?!" an elder reportedly yelled at Rdo rje in front of villagers, "have we eaten (embezzled) the temple funds? Who are you?? a ghost??" The elders' position was then strongly opposed by Rdo rje's supporters and Rdo rje refused to even show up the following year at the 2006 *Klu rol*. The conflict came to a head in 2007 when the central incarnate lama of Rong bo monastery, the young Shar tshang, was invited to the village temple to authenticate Rdo rje in front of the assembled villagers. Only then, with Rdo rje-as-Bya khyung back on his throne, did the 2007 *Klu rol* resume its ideal appearance for tourists' cameras.

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[4] See Ri gdengs 1994, Stuart et al. 1995, Epstein and Peng 1998, Nagano 2000, Buffetrille 2008, 'Brug thar and Sangye tshering 2005, Mkhar rtse rgyal 2005, 2006, 2009, Snying bo rgyal and Rino 2008, Sherab gyamtsho 2008.

Thus in summer 2007 we began to (re) interview key players and attend village meetings and rituals around the conflict. I also read the main invocation text (Tib. *bsang dpe*) for Skyes ma's principal mountain deity, Bya khyung. Bya khyung is the regional deity king, based in Reb kong's highest peak. He is a divine garuda bird with multiple possible emanations, reportedly first tamed by the first Shar tshang lama (17th century). It was then that I began to see beyond the "freeze frames" of most tourist and state portrayals of *Klu rol*, and indeed of scholarly accounts of the festival, to appreciate the actually dynamic politics and ongoing high stakes of these performances for both ordinary Tibetans and for state officials.

The Politics of Presence

I argue that it is especially important to consider Reb kong's *Klu rol* festival in this dynamic way, in order to think through the particularly Tibetan, and perhaps larger Inner Asian, politics of legitimacy, power and causation. These politics are manifest most importantly in what I see as a ritualized *demand for presence* among Tibetans: the largely tantric Buddhist ritual technologies that attempt a wide variety of forms of embodied engagement with divine and other invisible beings. In texts and experts' exegeses, these practices and their various agendas are often summed up under the rubric of "taming" (*'dul ba*). That term encompasses, in the basic *sadhana* ritual format (which many non-Buddhist rites mimic), practitioners' efforts to visualize, invoke, host, capture, contain, embody, exhort, attack or obligate a wide range of human and nonhuman beings to various ends (cf. Makley 2007). Thus, in contrast to the great prestige and focus on writing and textuality among Tibetan and foreign scholars of Buddhism, Tibetans' rituals and discourses in practice posit and demand embodied presence, that is, audiences and interactions with a wide range of normally invisible divine and superior beings. We could take pervasive meditative visualization practices in Tibetan rituals as attempts to do this. But most importantly, texts among Tibetans are vitally *performed* through chanting, a practice that entextualizes a situation, scaling it up and transmuting it through the presence of a human medium (monks, nuns, elders, lay tantrists, pious laity) (cf. Lempert 2012).

This focus on ritual demands for presence might be one way to link a wide variety of Buddhist and non-Buddhist lineages or traditions among Tibetans. Relevant to this is the recent spate of scholarly interest in taking

Tibetans' deity cults seriously, practices that often cross the bounds of orthodox tradition.[5] In this light, Skyes ma village's conflict over the authenticity of their deity medium made me see divine presence as a high-stakes politics of recognition in Reb kong, a process (still) foundational to the creation and maintenance of *human* personas and collectivities. This perspective then challenged me to situate *Klu rol* in a much broader context of intervillage and state-local relations over time, as well as in the intensifying ambivalences and indeterminacies of authoritative or legitimate presence under the increasing militarization of Tibetan regions into the 2000s (Makley 2013).

This is not to say that the nature of authority was not contested or ambivalent in these regions before CCP intervention. From this angle, we would need to consider any contemporary politics of presence in the larger timespace horizon of the Inner Asian frontier zone, of Buddhist, especially Dge lugs-sect encroachment, and of interethnic and inter-regime relations that mapped and re-mapped the region under competing jurisdictions (cf. Makley 2007). In this, scholars like Samten Karmay, Heather Stoddard, Geoffrey Samuel, Stanley Mumford, Caroline Humphrey, James Hevia, Patricia Berger, and Elliot Sperling have pointed out that legitimate presence has always been ambivalent or indeterminate in these Tibetan frontier regions especially.

Reb kong and its perhaps uniquely eclectic mix of sectarian and syncretic traditions and communities illustrate this. The politics of presence there was perhaps epitomized in the unprecedented formalization of the mountain deity cult in some 20 farming villages that practice *Klu rol* in the lower reaches of the Dgu chu river valley. Further, this ambivalence around legitimate presence can be seen in the moral tensions between Buddhist and non-Buddhist tropes and agents within *Klu rol's* multimedia collage of performances (black/red/fierce/mountain deities vs. white/pure/*klu*/Buddhas), as well as in multiple, competing *bsang dpe* texts (Skyes ma's elders had at least three of them, variously authored) (cf. Mumford 1989).

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[5] Christopher Bell wrote on this recently (2007), but others have been advocating such an approach for a while. See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, Samuel 1993, Karmay 1994, 1998, Beyer 1978, Huber 1999, Makley 2007, as well as many Tibetan scholars trained in the Qinghai ETP program.

However, this perspective requires that we consider the specificity of the politics of presence under the CCP. In Reb kong, I found, this specificity is most dramatically manifest in the great trauma and socio-political rupture of the 1958 "Democratic Reforms"—for most Tibetans I spoke to who remembered that time, that year, and *not* 1949, was when the revolution really hit the region. In post-Mao China or since the 1980s reforms, I see this intensifying ambivalence and danger of legitimate presence among Tibetans as encapsulated in what I call a "silent stand-off". By that I mean the unacknowledged agreement among residents not to publicly address the histories and political economies of specifically Tibetan sources of (divine) authority. In this way, everyone participates in pushing offstage speech and performance that would threaten CCP legitimacy, even as the reforms seemed to allow a great, so-called "revival" or "rebuilding" of Tibetan practices and institutions.

Alternative Methodologies

Historicizing the politics of presence in Tibetan regions like Reb kong would then require different methodologies from older structural-functionalist approaches that treated formal ritual or performance in relative isolation from other everyday contexts or ongoing politics offstage (e.g., quintessentially, Radcliffe-Brown). There are of course good reasons for taking up such an approach in these regions, either implicitly or explicitly. All Tibet scholars face the difficulties of conducting research under state repression in the PRC, and structural-functionalist methods allow for drawing heuristic methodological boundaries that keep one from straying into the dangerous realm of the "political".

However, I always keep in mind the long history of state-sponsored social science in the PRC. The bureaucratization and supervision of knowledge in that system works to manage ethnic difference under CCP rule through objectification processes that the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai called the "incarceration of the native" (cf. Appadurai 1996, Gupta and Ferguson 1992, Malkki 1997, Makley 2010). For Appadurai, that phrase refers to, on the one hand, categorizing or mapping practices that work to label, circumscribe, and emplace minority "nationalities" (Ch. *minzu*), and on the other to state security efforts vis-a-vis dissident minorities. In Chinese statist social science, structural-functionalist methods conveniently allow for reducing the functions of local ritual practices to the maintenance of quaint, bounded, indeed "harmonious" social groups. Thus what came to be labeled "religion" (Ch. *zongjiao*) and more recently "folk

custom" (Ch. *minsu wenhua*) in the PRC could be deemed to be safely apolitical.[6]

Such methods are still strongly constitutive of state policy and tourism in Tibetan regions. Consider the prominence of the term "harmony" (Ch. *hexie*) in public propaganda since the mid-2000s especially. Such slogans in street posters and campaigns depict an ideal Confucian state of affairs under benevolent CCP rule as a *fait accompli*. In actuality in Tibetan regions, "harmony" propaganda is an ongoing, high-stakes struggle to dominate public arenas with state presence and voice in the face of increasing discontent and unrest—hence the "silent stand-off", which famously broke in 2008 (cf. Makley 2009).

In this light, the methodological (and ethical) issues for researchers are rife. I found that reconsidering Reb kong's *Klu rol* festival from the perspective of a politics of presence, especially since 2008, is both risky (researchers can get locals and oneself in trouble) and very difficult (there is very little published scholarship to draw on that pushes the limits of statist historiography and tourism narratives). This is true perhaps of studying any ritualized practice among Tibetans in the PRC, but I would argue that Reb kong's *Klu rol*, despite the domesticated facade for state and tourist audiences, is particularly problematic.

There are multiple issues to consider, but here I point out three main shifts in methodological perspective that this approach to a politics of presence would require.

1. *(National) History to Historiography as a Process*

From this angle, we would have to see history as always already in the making, a selective process of remembering that is part and parcel of situated interests in evolving present situations. Considering history as historiographic practice in this way requires that, instead of taking temporal categories (e.g., "old" vs. "new society", "traditional" vs. "modern", "backward superstition" vs. "progressive science") as analytic tools, we analyze all periodizations as parts of particular agendas, and especially

[6] In China, such categories are definitively categories of the state. They are enshrined in the constitution, where "religion" is distinguished from the atheism of the modern CCP, and in legislation pertaining to the administration of ethnic minorities. Chinese law recognizes "normal religion" (Ch. *zhengchang zongjiao*), to be guaranteed constitutional protection, as the five institutionalized traditions of Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism (minus the Pope!), and Protestantism. Meanwhile, all less systematized and more local ritual practices fall under the still-illegal category of (feudal) "superstition" (Ch. *mixin*) (cf. Anagnost 1987, Gladney 1994).

as components of modernist nation-state building (cf. Duara 1995). Thus I had to see Reb kong's *Klu rol* festival in the 2000s *not* as a "revival" of "tradition" in the reform era, but as an always-shifting practice since its inception in the valley.

Further, I had to take all of my interlocutors' historical accounts of *Klu rol* in 2007 and beyond not just as "oral history" (narratives attempting to describe a past event), but also as narrative *positionings* of themselves vis-a-vis their contemporaries *and* myself. For example, in my article (2013) on Skyes ma's conflict during *Klu rol*, I look at how two village elders (one the former village head, the other the current party secretary I call Tshe ring) worked to morally position themselves in our interviews—for me, the foreign researcher, and for their absent critics in ongoing village politics around the legitimacy of their decisions on behalf of the village.

Indeed, *Klu rol* in Skyes ma and elsewhere, I found, is taken to be an important indicator of village elders' authentic engagement with the divine king Bya khyung. That publicly performed dialogue is supposed to evidence the human leaders' legitimate presence for themselves, as well as for increasingly heterogeneous, scattered and factionalized villagers. Thus for the two elders, *Klu rol* worked in their narratives as a moral touchstone, a sign of both nostalgia for an "old society" and of an ongoing critique of what they saw as undesirable change and dissolution of village unity.

Another example of history in the making through accounts of Reb kong's *Klu rol* is the local scholar Mkhar rtse rgyal's 3-hour radio program on *Klu rol*, aired on Qinghai Radio in 2005. As research for his then-forthcoming book (2009), Mkhar rtse rgyal had conducted interviews with elders in several Reb kong villages about *Klu rol* in the early 2000s. In the show, he presents himself as the local expert on the festival, framed as a valley-wide institution. His work is thus very important for scaling up the scholarly perspective on *Klu rol* from the previous focus on village-scale traditions. But throughout the show, he and his radio interviewers work together to both celebrate the festival's importance and circumscribe its contemporary consequences and stakes. They present *Klu rol* first and foremost as "folk culture" (Tib. *dmangs khrod rig gnas*). And the elders Mkhar rtse rgyal consulted are framed (and circumscribed) as "folk elders" (Tib. *dmangs khrod rgan po*).

At key moments, the places where their voices are most strongly statist, they work hard to construct a collaborative portrayal of *Klu rol* as the unproblematic revival of village tradition, seeking social functions for it that would justify its continued existence in the face of post-Mao secular "development": it creates obedience or respect for parents; it demonstrates

ideal, happy, and voluntary participation on behalf of the collective; it creates ideal village consensus. This of course, as local Tibetans sarcastically pointed out to me, was a particularly jarring departure from the reality, given the massive conflict that had erupted at Skyes ma's *Klu rol* that same year (Mkhar rtse rgyal was taping his radio show at the very same time as that conflict was unfolding in dramatic ways).

And in terms of a historical narrative, like other Tibetan accounts, Mkhar rtse rgyal's historiography links *Klu rol*, which is replete with martial references, staging young village men as soldiers, to the Tibetan imperial era *thematically*, not historically. The *Klu rol* dances, he argued, are just portrayals of an ideal treaty between "Tibet" and "China" on the banks of a lake in A mdo in the 9th century. Of course all Tibetans speaking publicly in the PRC have to navigate delicate politics. Here Mkhar rtse rgyal's invocation of the imperial era treaty simultaneously gestures to PRC state multiethnic "harmony", while obliquely alluding to Tibetan independence won in battle.

However, like others, in this account there is no attempt to trace the actual social history of the practice and its emergence in the Reb kong valley. From the perspective of a politics of presence then, such accounts work in tandem with actual performances of *Klu rol* to create competing historiographies of an ideal and distant past in the face of massive contemporary changes: *Klu rol* as an annual harvest festival in Skyes ma village was in fact starkly anachronistic; no household farmed anymore. Indeed local historiography as self-conscious practice is now booming in Reb kong, mostly around re-authorizing the village (*sde ba*) as a foundational communal unit in the face of the place-destroying abstractions of state-led capitalism and especially land "management" and appropriation (cf. Makley 2011, 2013).

2. *(Abstract) Space to Territory/Jurisdiction*

The politics of presence in the frontier zone is foundationally a spatial politics. Divine beings ground and "author" or voice particular places as communities' territories and leaders and lamas' jurisdictions (cf. Feuchtwang 2004). In this light, my student and I came to see Reb kong's *Klu rol* (ironically, given its domestication and commodification in the Reb kong tourism brand) as primarily emerging out of the intensifying and often bloody battles over territory in the Reb kong valley into the 19th century. Much more historical research is needed to clarify this, but evidence suggests it emerged as a formalized practice across the valley only then.

This perspective then required broadening the spatial scope of the analysis, from the local or village scale to intervillage and state-local relations. This in turn required broadening the range of sources I drew on. In written texts, I looked at Tibetan language ritual and scholarly texts as well as Chinese language local historiography. Most helpful among the latter were the local "social history" collections (Ch. *wenshi ziliao*) and Huangnan and Tongren gazetteers. And in oral interactions, I did not limit myself to just talking with elders and male experts, but I spoke with as many ordinary villagers as I could, including women.

From this research, I realized that *Klu rol* as an annual propitiation and offering to specific villages' mountain deities was about particular factions of leaders and would-be leaders re-securing the village as a principle landholding unit amidst competing and encroaching administrative geographies. *Klu rol* was not just "entertainment"; it was about competing claims to jealously guarded local autonomy and thus, to collective fortune and long term vitality (Tib. *g.yang*) guarded by particular networks of protector deities and human leaders, a politics that involved of course not just Tibetans (e.g., Mongour villages downriver also adopted the practice).

Jurisdictional wars had already heated up with the battles between Rong bo and Labrang (cf. Nietupski 2011, Stevenson 1999, 'Jigs med 1988). And from the late 19th century on, Reb kong's central Rong bo valley saw the beginnings of significant settlements of Chinese and Muslim traders, as well as the first occupations by Qing and then KMT forces, and American and European Christian missions (HNWSZL 1996). But it was the forced taxes and depredations of the Muslim warlords under the Xining-based Ma clan beginning in the 1920s that most Tibetan elders still talk about as the first radical disjuncture in the life of the valley.

From the stories we were hearing about Skyes ma, and my student argues this in his senior thesis, it seems that *Klu rol* emerged as an extension of annual *la btsas* offerings for Bya khyung up on the mountain, but with victory in a bloody inter-village battle over land in the late 19th century, the first *Klu rol* dances down in the village both celebrated that victory and enhanced the role and presence of Skyes ma's mountain deity protectors by giving new, highly public roles to human mediums (*lha pa*) whose bodies hosted them[7]—*Klu rol* performances upped the ante

[7] This was not necessarily the first *Klu rol* held in Reb kong; evidence suggests other villages' festivals predated Skyes ma's. I still have not seen or heard an account of the first *Klu rol* ever held in the valley.

in Reb kong's frontier-zone politics of presence as the region faced the seismic shifts of the 20th century. From this angle, I found that most older Skyes ma residents I spoke to ironically experienced the 1958 "Democratic Reforms" under the CCP and subsequent collectivization movement as a militarized annexation of their communal lands, and the replacement of the village, local Tibetans' primary collective unit, with the production brigade and then, after reforms, with an "administrative village".

This perspective required in-depth historical research into Skyes ma village itself and its evolving role in the main valley floor as some households came to be among the most affluent in the valley by the 2000s amidst increasing competition among households and between villages over access to capital and state positions. Skyes ma was in fact the first village to dare to hold *Klu rol* again in 1981—without deity mediums. But by 1983 the deity (and thus the village) was back, and in fact perhaps more authoritative than ever (cf. Makley 2013).

In this light, one crucial place to understand *Klu rol* as an intervillage politics of presence is in the relationships manifest in the historically obligated but often dramatically shifting ritualized meetings between linked villages' entranced mediums. There is a complex history embedded there of intermarriage and interlineage relations, of feuds and counter-feuds, of jealousies and diplomatic repairs, and of shared and/or rival deities and lamas. Another place to look would be in ongoing Buddhist-non-Buddhist tensions among villages throughout the central valley, for example in villagers' accounts of the efficacy and presence of mountain deities in lowland, farming villages vs. the annual tantric Buddhist (*sngags pa*) practice of *'cham* dances in highland villages (cf. Mumford 1989).

Into the 2000s, it turned out, wealthy, lowland, urbanizing villages like Skyes ma had ambivalent relations with their former village allies. The embattled Skyes ma medium Rdo rje (as Bya khyung) for example often refused to go to other villages, or Rdo rje went but remained unentranced. And we still hear vastly different accounts of Skyes ma's contemporary status among Reb kong residents today: as proud communal landholder and original patron of Rong bo Monastery, as loyal subjects of Bya khyung, divine regional king, or as "Chinese Reb kong", a village of apolitical business families or opportunistic state cadres in the midst of intensifying unrest. Even Skyes ma elders and the scholar Mkhar rtse rgyal lamented that now Bya khyung's presence was fading, that he no longer "heard" village requests because the younger generations were selfish and lacked faith.

I found, however, that the reasons for Bya khyung's altered presence in Skyes ma were more complex than that. With the reform era, urbanization

and state-sponsored land appropriation threatened the revived village anew. The conflict over the medium in 2005 turned out to be in part about claims concerning which faction of village leaders was authorized by Bya khyung to protect village collective fortune against further land encroachment amidst intensifying discourses about state corruption and private land sales (cf. Makley 2013).

3. *(Decontextualized) Text to Situated Media*

Finally, to really get at the politics of presence in Tibetan frontier zones like Reb kong, we have to consider all forms of communication, even those pretending to the highest objectivity and political neutrality, as performed or mediated by their mediums' current competencies, interests and positions, "religious" or not. In this way, we can avoid those statist or modernist dichotomies that come to the fore especially when deity presence and the "possession" of human mediums by invisible beings is at issue (e.g., mind/spirit vs. body, culture vs. society, resistance vs. oppression, subjectivity vs. objectivity) (cf. Makley 2010a). This would entail really paying attention to the specificities of the different ontologies or materialities of presence in question: Tibetan notions of embattled and embodied fortune and misfortune, for example (cf. Diemberger 2005, Humphrey 2007, da Col 2007, Samtshoskyid and Roche 2011). This is not just about grasping cosmological details. Considering ontological specificities requires looking at the nature of particular mediated performances—the relationship between texts and speech in practice, or the relations among specific genres of performance and ideal practitioners and personas within them (cf. Goffman 1981, Bakhtin 1981, Hanks 1996, Keane 1997).

In this light then, we can see ritualists as *commensurate actors* with state officials (vs. as quaint, backward, misguided, symbolic "folk"). All persons are "voicing" or performing as mediums of competing authoritative presences. Thus in the paper I wrote (2013), I juxtaposed Tshe ring, Skyes ma village's party secretary, with Rdo rje the village's deity medium as the two main rivals in the Skyes ma conflict, and considered the complexities of the state versus the deity's presences that they were attempting to both voice and avoid in dialogue with each other and various others.

Conclusion

To conclude, I reiterate that the methodological implications of this perspective on the politics of presence in Reb kong are very difficult. There

are obvious political risks in pursuing this kind of research under state repression. There are also huge time and skill demands for long term ethnohistorical research in multiple languages, which I think has only just begun in the valley. But there are still windows of opportunity, like the recent upsurge of Tibetan local historiography in Reb kong, for more collaboration in constructing a nuanced ethnohistory of the region, so that we could begin to see these various communities and factions as interlinked and shifting over time.

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DANCING THE GODS: SOME TRANSFORMATIONS OF *'CHAM* IN REB KONG

Dawn Collins[1]

Introduction

This chapter perhaps raises more questions than it answers and, in any case, I hope will identify some possible avenues for future research into the transformations of Tibetan ritual dance (*'cham*)[2] in contemporary Reb kong. The performance of ritual dances can be viewed as being practiced within the context of rituals found in the Indic Tantric traditions from which many Tibetan Tantric practices derive. Traditions of ritual dance include those found in the Newar cities of the Kathmandu valley, in which masked dancers in trance annually represent wrathful goddesses, the *Navadurgā*. Embodying these wrathful *Aṣṭamātṛka* deities, dancers may drink the blood of sacrificed animals and wield real swords. Other examples of masked dances are found in the *teyyam* rituals of Kerala[3] and the *bhutam* rituals of Southern Kannada[4] in which low caste dancers are said to be possessed by wrathful deities, such as *Bhairava, Kālī* and *Cāmuṇḍā*.[5] There is an antinomian aspect to these practices, reflecting that found in early Tantric traditions such as the Śaivite and the Siddhas, in which practitioners deliberately engage in behaviour signifying a radical rejection of

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[1] The initial impetus and idea for this chapter came during fieldwork in Reb kong during 2009, and I would like to thank Dpa' mo skyid for her invaluable assistance at the village *'cham*, which has resulted in the ethnographical section and Gerald Roche for his input during that period, throughout the process of writing this chapter, and for the use of his images to illustrate it (for a collection of his images of Reb kong *'cham* see http://www.flickr.com/photos/geraldroche/sets/72157629558658273/). I gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Frederick Williamson Memorial Fund for the doctoral studies and fieldwork from which period this chapter derives. I also wish to thank Nicholas Sihlé and Geoffrey Samuel for their valuable comments during and after the conference 'Unity and Diversity: Monastic and Non-monastic Traditions in Amdo', Cardiff University, 30 Sept–2 Oct 2011, and on earlier drafts, Geoffrey Samuel for posing questions for me regarding my topic on his 2010 visit to Reb kong, and Mona Schrempf for her insightful and detailed comments on an earlier draft.

[2] Tibetan names and *terms* are given according to Wylie's system of transliteration.

[3] For studies, see Freeman 1993, 1994, 1999 and Flood 1997 (Samuel 2008: 319).

[4] For studies, see Claus 1973, 1979, 1984, 1993; Nichter 1977 (Samuel 2008: 119).

[5] See Samuel 2008: 319ff for examples of other similar masked ritual dance traditions and studies concerning them.

the norms of behaviour in society, thereby demonstrating their freedom to live outside of its constraints.[6] The antinomian character of the lifestyle of the Indian *Siddha* practitioners from whom the *Vajrayāna* Tantric practice found in Tibetan regions can be said to originate (cf. Samuel 2005: 57), underlies a meditative practice involving the transformation of individuals and their environs into that of deity and deity abode (*maṇḍala*) respectively, the ritual assumption of such divine power entailing its own dangers for practitioners. Tantric ritual practice is thus characterised by such dangerous elements; powerful forces encountered by ritual specialists qualified to embody them for the good of communities.[7]

Tibetan communities, both Buddhist and Bon po, in the Tibetan regions of the People's Republic of China glossed here as the Tibetan Plateau, in the Himalayas and in Diaspora, perform a variety of dances known as *'cham* or *gar* as part of ritual practices. The ritual dances termed *'cham* are said to originate in the dreams of great lamas or treasure revealers (*gter ston*),[8] as perhaps is reflected in contemporary manifestations such as the 'vajra dance' currently practiced by students of the Buddhist teacher Nam mkha'i nor bu Rin po che.[9] The *'cham* dances evoke deities, including both enlightened Buddhas and local protector deities, mythical heroes and historical figures. The latter recall origins for such dances as found in Tibetan historiographies, such as the tale of the eighth century Indian Tantric master Padmasambhava's dancing to subdue malevolent spirits creating obstacles to the foundation of Bsam yas, Tibet's first Buddhist monastery, or the monk Dpal gyi rdo rje's ritual killing of the anti Buddhist king Glang dar ma in 842 whilst dancing (Berg 2008: 77–78). *'Cham* texts and practices differ widely (Cantwell 1985), yet are mostly associated with Tantric ritual. These Tantric *'cham* are mostly performed by male dancers (monks or lay practitioners), who appear in costumes visually representative of the deities, often after ritually invoking and identifying with them through meditative practices. These dancers embody the deities

[6] For studies of early Indic Tantric practices see Sanderson 1994, 1995, 1998; Samuel 2008. For a study focusing on the Śaivites, see Lorenzen 1972.

[7] As Samuel comments, particularly in earlier societies devoid of audio-visual technology, the evocation of such deities in masked ritual dances must have had "some real purchase on the collective psyche" (Samuel 2008: 318). See Gutschow and Bāsukala 1987; Iltis 1987; van der Hoek 1994; Korvald 1994 (Samuel 2008: 315ff).

[8] An example is that of the great historical figure and *gter ston*, Padma gling pa (see Gayley 2007: 114, n. 72; Schrempf 1999: 200), and many other examples can be found in the Bka' brgyud tradition's stories about 17th century lamas.

[9] This dance came to the master in a dream and was subsequently taught by him to his students. See http://www.dzogchen.ee/_vadzratants.htm (last accessed 14th June 2013).

of the *maṇḍala* and, structurally reflecting the *tshogs* ritual, destroy or nullify malevolent forces in the form of effigies during the course of the *'cham* (Kohn 2001: 185ff; Samuel 1993: 265ff; Beyer 1973: 312–318). This ritual act is performed in order to remove obstacles for the well being of the community, thereby preserving the health and fortunes of its individual members.

This chapter will discuss *'cham* in Tibetan cultural regions, drawing upon ethnographic material from the Reb kong region of A mdo.[10] It will pose the question as to what role *'cham* performs, or how its function in subjugating malevolent forces and purifying persons and their conjoined environments plays out in the lives of contemporary communities and their individual members. The chapter will explore what roles *'cham* has traditionally played in Tibetan communities and examine some of their transformations in contemporary Reb kong, with particular emphasis on the relationship between institutional and popular perceptions of and engagement in its performative ritual practice. In doing so, it will look at notions of blessing or empowerment (*byin babs*)[11] and explore ways in which the phenomena of trance dancing occurring during contemporary Bon po *'cham* practices in Reb kong can be understood.

A Reb kong Village 'cham

In Reb kong there are various communities performing dances referred to locally as *'cham*. In discussing the resonances these *'cham*, and the phenomenon of trance dancing during Bon po *'cham*, have for their surrounding communities, there will now follow an ethnographic account of a Bon po *'cham* held in a Reb kong village. This *'cham* was organised by a community of Bon po lay Tantric practitioners at the Bon po village temple, the *gsas khang*, and took place in November 2009. The Bon po traditions in Reb kong are long-standing and, according to Tsering Thar, those of the area known as Kokonor, within which he includes Reb kong, are chief in A mdo (Thar 2008). The monastic community is based southwest of Rong bo in the Reb kong valley, where they have a large monastery known

[10] The Tibetan term *'cham* is variously spelt *'chams* or *'cham* in texts. Here the spelling *'cham* will be used throughout.

[11] The more generic term *byin rlabs* is also used to express notions of blessing, but since the term *byin babs* carries the specific sense of falling / descending, and tends to occur in contexts such as Tantric ritual and when describing the type of phenomena to be discussed in this chapter, *byin babs* will be used throughout.

as Bon brgya. Alongside this monastic community exist Bon po Tantric practitioners from family lineages, the 'Hon' (*dpon*), of Reb kong. These lay and often married Tantric practitioners are spread throughout the Reb kong valley. Their fifteen *Gsas khang* are individually placed in villages known to be mainly Bon po, and these are broadly grouped regionally into four Bon po communities (*mang*): the *Yar nang*, the *Stod phyog*s, the *Smad phyog*s and the *Snyon bzang* (Tsering Thar 2008: 541ff; also see Millard, this volume). The Bon po village, wherein the *'cham* described in the following ethnography took place, is connected with *Mdo sngags phun tshogs dar rgyas gling gsas khang*, which belongs to the third of these Bon *mang*: the *Sman phyogs bon mang*, the villages wherein its members live are found in North East Reb kong.[12] The *'cham* took place inside and in the courtyard of the village *gsas khang*, and was performed by a mixture of Bon po Tantric practitioners and local villagers.

A local Tibetan scholar, Dpa' mo skyid, and I travelled to the village by taxi from the centre of Rong bo town, the main town of Reb kong, arriving at the village around eight thirty in the morning on the 10th day of the 10th lunar month. The Bon po Tantric Practitioners were already chanting in the temple. They were performing refuge chants when we arrived, and then continued on with other preliminary practices. There were two papers posted up on the window of the temple. The first was the *ser phreng gi rim pa*, a list describing the order in which the ensuing procession would take place, followed by a list of rules to be observed by the Bon po Tantric Practitioners who were responsible for the enactment of the *'cham.*[13] The enforcement of these rules and so proper conduct of the *'cham* was entrusted to two *dge bskos*. These Bon po Tantric Practitioners

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[12] For an overview of the Bon communities in Reb kong, see Millard (this volume).

[13] The *ser phreng gi rim pa* ran as follows: *dge bskos kyis spos 'dren pa, dung chen gnyis, dung dkar gnyis, rgya gling gnyis, gdugs, phyag rgya, rgyal mtshan, ka 'phan, dar bzhi, dom ra tsan rnams, zhwa nag tsan rnams* and *tshogs mar.* A rough translation and description of the contents of this *ser phreng gi rim pa* is as follows: *dge bskos* ('geké') offer incense, two large conch (these are the giant horns that trail on the ground), two white conch, two mouth flutes, umbrella/parasol, banner (black), victory banner (small and long), a banner with a tree shaped design, four flags, horns of bears (referring to elderly Bon po Tantric Practitioners wearing pointed hats, black (fringed) hats (again referring to a group of Bon po Tantric Practitioners) and a group (referring to the rest of the Bon po Tantric Practitioners).

The list of rules ran as follows: *zhwa nag dang dkar mo rtse rgyal tsan rnams kyis ril ba shigs nas rgyab tu sham dgos / dbu mdzad kyi nag mo'i bskul ba bton pa dang zhwa nag tsan rnams kyis gar 'cham byas nas sgrub gang phyi la 'bud dgos / zhwa nag tsan rnams phyi la ma bud gong la tshogs mang gcig kyang sgrub khang khyams la bud na chad pa nan mo gcod gnes yin / 'grig lam dang go rim med par zir zir yong yong gis ser phreng mi byed pa gal che / dge bskos gnyis kyis ser phreng la go rim yod pa'i bkod sgrig byed dgos /*

responsible for discipline wore distinctive leopard print clothing and carried sticks.

The *dge bskos* are elders who became *'cham* leaders through sponsoring a previous *'cham.* The chanting, which lasted the best part of two hours, concluded with a short *'cham* in which all the *'cham* dancers, mostly masked and wearing hats, processed out of the temple and circled around several senior Bon po Tantric Practitioners who placed effigies representing harmful forces in the centre of the temple courtyard. The Bon po Tantric Practitioners pointed their *phur bu* at these effigies, which were laid on the ground. Some of the *'cham* dancers flung themselves onto the floor with sweeping gestures of suppression directed towards the effigies. The purpose of this short morning *'cham* was to subdue harmful influences; the effigies representing these were then discarded. The *'cham* dancers then re-entered the temple, once more processing in order of importance, and danced, whilst the Bon po Tantric Practitioners completed the concluding rites of the morning session.

After a break of around two or three hours in which villagers retired for lunch in village houses, people gradually began to reassemble in the temple courtyard. We spoke with one of the smallest *'cham* dancers. He said he had practiced for two days and that, yes, he probably would get into trouble with his teacher for missing school. Those Bon po *'cham* dancers who were not Bon po Tantric Practitioners had been selected from amongst ordinary villagers, according to whether they were physically suitable for their parts. At about two thirty in the afternoon, the conch blower summoned the Bon po Tantric Practitioners who were not already present, and they began chanting in the temple. As they chanted, a variety of preparations for the afternoon *'cham* took place in the courtyard. These included chalking out the space, placing carpeted wooden planks as seats for the Bon po Tantric Practitioners, and a tractor setting up shop for snacks and offerings. Eventually the Bon po Tantric Practitioners and *'cham* dancers again emerged in order from the temple, processing and making offerings as per the *ser phreng gi rim pa*, each of the *'cham* dancers performing. During the early part of the afternoon *'cham* two uniformed

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A loose translation of the above list of rules: The black and white hat Bon po Tantric Practitioners must let their hair hang freely down their backs. The chant master must chant *bskul ba bton pa* and the black hat Bon po Tantric Practitioners perform *'cham*, coming out of the inner temple (lit: house of accomplishment). The black hat Bon Po Tantric Practitioners are the first of the group to come out of the inner temple. If the correct order in coming out, according to the order of events, is not observed, there will be severe punishment. The two *dge bskos* must strictly keep the order of events to order.



Fig. 10.1. Preparing the Ground with Offerings. Photo: Gerald Roche, January 2012.



Fig. 10.2. In Full Flow. Photo: Gerald Roche, January 2012.

police from a nearby Reb kong village entered the temple courtyard and questioned myself, the only foreigner, in order to ascertain the legitimacy of my presence in the Reb kong valley. They left after completing their checks and the *'cham* continued on throughout the afternoon and until dusk fell.

The most important figure in this village's *'cham* was the one named Gza', whose dances are unique to this village. This deity was followed by other characters including Chos rgyal, Sgra bla'i rgyal mo, Nag mo, Lha mo, Btsan, Rgyal bo, Bya rog, Gangs re, and Mchod 'bul lha mo.[14]

Towards the latter part of the *'cham*, several of the villagers who were not performing as masked dancers in the *'cham* but were spectators situated outside of the *'cham* grounds' chalk circle, went into what appeared to be states of trance. The word 'trance' is used here, as opposed to 'possession', in order not to suggest that these people were possessed in the sense of being medium for a spirit or deity, since this is not how their state

[14] This list is according to our memory from the day. Tsering Thar lists the following characters as found in Reb kong *'cham: Zhwa-nag, A bse rgyal ba, Srid pa'i rgyal mo, Ma chen bom ra, Stag ri rong, Gshin rje, Dmu bdud, Dmag dpon* and *Mchod 'bub gyi lha mo* (Tsering Thar 2008: 546). *Srid pa'i rgyal mo* is the leader of the nine protector deities usually represented in Bon po ritual dances (see Schrempf 2000: 332; also see Karmay 1983).



Fig. 10.3. Dancing the Gods. Photo: Gerald Roche, January 2012.



Fig. 10.4. Truly Dralijemmo has come to this place! Gerald Roche, January 2012.



Fig. 10.5. For the Protectors. Photo: Gerald Roche, January 2012.

is culturally defined. The term used locally for this state of trance is *byin brlabs babs*, which literally means 'the descent of blessings'. These trance states were precipitated by the appearance of the fearsome black masked figure representing Sgra bla'i rgyal mo. This deity is prime amongst the protector deities venerated by the Reb kong Bon po communities, as protectress emanation of the female deity Chu lcam rgyal mo. The latter holds the dominant position in Bon rituals, being the female deity who originated humanity and who is queen ruling the cosmic order of the universe (Karmay 1986).[15] The appearance of this deity was greeted by offerings: a flurry of white scarves (*kha btags*), wind horses, fire crackers and showers of beer and 'arak', the local alcoholic spirits.

The first person to fall into trance was a young woman of about thirty who emerged from a group of women standing to the left of the temple courtyard's main gate. Her body started shaking and then, after a few minutes, she started making gestures with her hands that were akin to those performed during Tantric practice. Then, her hair braided in two long plaits tied together at the bottom and her thick A mdo *phyu pa* flowing out around her, she danced into the inner spaces of the *'cham* grounds, seeming to request Sgra bla'i rgyal mo to dance with her. She danced several times in anti-clockwise direction, circling around (performing *skor ba*) the *gtor ma* at the centre of the chalk circle within which the masked dances were taking place. About six or seven women spectators reacted by shaking, prostrating and crying things like 'Tsawey Lama' (*Rtsa ba'i bla ma*: 'Root Teacher'), 'Lama Rinpoché' (Bla ma rin po che: 'Precious Teacher') and 'Dralijemmo' (Sgra bla'i rgyal mo)!' Some elderly women near where we were standing began prostrating, proclaiming in an A mdo dialect, a phrase whose meaning in English is translatable as 'Truly Dralijemmo has come to this place!'.

A man in his late thirties then also began to shake. He was standing to the front of the crowd and to the left of the temple's main gate, between the large group of woman towards the back and the deity seat situated half way along the side of the temple courtyard. As his trance became more pronounced he started making wailing sounds and moving some way into the chalk circle but not turning around the *gtor ma* (doing *skor ba*). One *dge bskos* made sure the man did not approach the

[15] For a description of this origin myth, see Karmay 1983: 195 ff. For discussion of the connotations surrounding and background to the name *sgra bla/dgra lha*, see Gibson 1985.

'cham deity too closely, and guided him back to the edge of the *'cham* grounds' chalk circle. The men there supported him under his armpits and he swayed from side to side as the woman in trance continued to dance with Sgra bla'i rgyal mo. His trance subsided soon after the woman's did. She returned to her mother and sister. Her mother fixed her disheveled clothing and Dpa' mo skyid heard her scolding her daughter, asking why she had behaved like that in public. The woman cried, replying that it was out of her control, so she couldn't do otherwise. Throughout the whole sequence of trance dancing, the Bon po Tantric practitioners sitting in rows in front of the temple were showing signs of trance such as shaking. Events ended with the large ritual weapon (*gtor bzlog*) being carried out through the main gate of the temple, as people made a corridor for those wanting blessing to file underneath it. Events ended at around four thirty in the afternoon. We were told that this *gtor bzlog* for the protectors that had been positioned at the centre of the *'cham* grounds would now be placed at an intersection.

Situating the Reb kong 'cham: *Some Spatial Transformations*

As can be seen from this ethnographic account, the Tibetan term *'cham* is not restricted to masked ritual dances performed at monasteries, although this is arguably most often its referent. There are in fact a wide range of settings in which performances termed *'cham* occur, from large to small monasteries to lay or Tantric practitioner (*Sngags pa*) temples in villages, or as part of state rituals. It is worth noting that there exists no one to one correspondence between particular *'cham* and the ritual cycles within which they appear. The same *'cham* can appear in different Buddhist or Bon ritual contexts. There are even dances referred to textually as *'cham* that do not strictly belong to Buddhist or Bon po traditions. All these dances are related to dance forms such as the court *gar, a che lha mo*, or folk dance-songs (*sgor gzhas*). Indeed performances termed *'cham* found in Bhutan, although part of Buddhist Tantric ritual, are threaded through with such popular dances. It is, in this context, not possible to say that these dances are entirely within the purview of folk or popular dances, as they would be in other contexts. They can, moreover, be considered as offerings, consistent with the Tantric ritual of which they form a part.[16]

[16] Personal communication with a Bhutanese *'cham dpon*, of Tangsibjee village, Trongsa, Bhutan, December 2011.

There are also narrative dances forming part of performances termed *'cham*, which can be placed somewhere on the borders between dances pertaining directly to Tantric ritual and those of a more secular nature such as the folk or popular dances mentioned above.[17] As the above description indicates, dances included in performances termed *'cham* can span a wide variety of dance forms. These range from the specifically Tantric, i.e. those in which the dancers represent deities within a Tantric *maṇḍala*, to popular folk or traditional dances. A number of narrative or traditional/folk dances, depending upon the context, could therefore be considered as occupying liminal spaces which can neither be considered exclusively pertaining to Tantric ritual nor merely folk or popular dances.

Dances taking place as part of Tantric ritual are generally termed *'cham*, but not exclusively so since the term *gar* is also used. Scholars have argued that the salient feature defining *'cham* is it being a public ritual dance rather than a secret initiatory dance.[18] Schrempf says, in the context of Buddhist *'cham*, that the term *gar* usually refers to dances performed for and by initiates and without masks, as part of preparatory Tantric rites, either within the temple (*lha khang)*, or *sa gar* performed at the place a *maṇḍala* will be constructed, whereas *'cham* usually refers to the public, masked dances performed in the temple courtyard (Schrempf 1999: 201). The manual on *'cham* (*'cham yig*) translated by Nebesky Wojkowitz and attributed primarily to the fifth Dalai Lama suggests that the thing defining a ritual dance as *'cham* is it being a *maṇḍala* rite focusing on a particular Tantric deity (Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1976). There also exist in the Reb kong region of A mdo dances termed *'cham*, yet not entailing masks and falling outside the context of Buddhist or Bon Tantric practices. These ritual dances are enacted during the annual Klu rol festival in honour of the mountain gods and the serpent spirits (*klu*).[19] They are known locally

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[17] Examples of such narrative *'cham* include the Bhutanese dance portraying Milarepa and the hunter, and the Buddhist rendition of Padmasambhava, Guru Rinpoché, subduing malevolent forces as per mythio-historical account.

[18] See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1997: 5, referring to Bu ston. Also see Schrempf, referring to the work of scholars such as Stoddard (1986) and Fedotev (1986), Rakra Sprul sku Thub bstan chos dar and Gonsar Tulku. She also discussed the controversy amongst scholars about whether *'cham* can be considered a *maṇḍala* dance or not (Schrempf 1999: 215 n. 19).

[19] It should be noted that the term *'cham* is not usually used to refer to *klu rol* dances, terms such as offering (*mchod pa*), play (*rtsed mo*) or *gar* being more prevalent (for studies concerning the *klu rol*, see Reb gong pa Mkhar rtse rgyal. 2009; Snying bo rgyal & Rino 2008; and Buffetrille 2004). For a persuasive theory of an ethno-history of the *klu rol*, its divine presences and their interlocutors, see Makley (this volume). For an article discussing the differences and similarities between *'cham* and *klu rol*, see Bkra bho 1992.

as *'cham* and appear in related textual traditions as such. Dpal ldan bkra shis and Kevin Stuart, writing about the Klu rol practiced in the former's home village of Gling rgyal,[20] distinguish three kinds of dance offered by residents to deities during the festival. They say that this classification is based on where the dances are performed, by whom and at what time. The third type of dance in this tripartite categorisation is known as the 'goddess entertainment' *'cham* (*lha mo gar 'cham*) and is the only one of the Klu rol in which women are involved (Dpal ldan bkra shis & Kevin Stuart 1998).[21]

As Sophie Day suggests, *'cham* recalls historical processes as it (re)enacts 'the process of creating a civilisation out of spirits and people from the beginnings of time till the present day' (Day 1989: 19). Mona Schrempf comments that: 'Instead of thinking about traditions as mere "survivals" from or "revivals" of the past—even though they might be locally understood as such—it makes more sense to analyze them through their present contexts as localized and multi-vocal reproductions and inscriptions of historical imagination.' (Schrempf 2006: 1).[22] Since the fifth Dalai Lama's seventeenth century introduction of large festivals to which the Tibetan public had unrestricted access, such public performances have functioned to unite, consolidate and demonstrate worldly and spiritual powers. In doing so, they evoke historical themes and become method by which communities strengthen and reaffirm cultural and ethnic identities (cf. Berg 2008). Performance references to events of a mythio-historical nature, or representations of them, can be seen as imaginary tropes which re-conjure present communities into being. To add to this, performance traditions like that of *'cham*, could be understood on a model of performance which is fluid and laden with the potential to either reiterate or

[20] This village is known in Chinese as Langjia village in Tongren County, Qinghai Province.

[21] A woman from Gnyan thog village also described this dance to me. She said she was desperately trying to avoid being re-enlisted to perform it by her fellow villagers, allowing them to think this was because of her natural modesty as a young woman. The real reason, however, was not because she fitted the culturally acceptable and expected mold of a naive and bashful young girl, but rather that she found the dance intensely boring and slow. When I asked whether the speed of the dance had something to do with it being traditionally performed by women, who were considered physically incapable of anything more energetic, or that it would be immodest, she replied that the dance was like this because it was intended more for the serpent spirits than the mountain gods and that the former like such slow, meditative moves in preference to the warlike leaps of the dances for the mountain gods. (Personal communication, 2009)

[22] For studies concerning *'cham* and revival, see Schrempf 1995; Kapstein and Goldstein 1998. For a study of religious revival comparing Chinese, Tibetan and other 'minority' traditions, see Wellens 2010.

critique, and thus possibly destabilise, established orders (Ahmed 2008). Through exploring the transformations found in the present context of *'cham* performances, some insight may be gained into movements towards or away from established orders and what their implications may be for the societies from which they emerge and for the (re)negotiation of their members' identities.

Transformations of the socio-political spaces Reb kong's rural communities inhabit have been radical in recent times. As suggested by Geoffrey Samuel, the Tibetan Plateau has "historically been a region where centralised political regimes were barely achievable" (Samuel 2005: 32). This pattern of relative regional autonomy has shifted in modern times to one in which advances in technology leading to much greater mobility and communication between central authorities and even remote regional communities have facilitated the advent of unprecedented centralised state control. Tibetan societies and individuals, classified by the Chinese state as one of its fifty six national ethnic groups (Ch. *minzu*), have and are undergoing a process of radical adjustment from peoples who went about their daily business in relative autonomy to ones subject to centralised state controls constituting an "unprecedented regulation of their everyday lives" (Makley 2007: 33). In the ensuing (re)negotiation of regional and individual identities, a variety of strategies have been observed within which *'cham* may play a role. Charlene Makley notes, during the 1990s, the growing use of the Tibetan notion of fatherland (*pha yul*) in countering state discourse proposing its own authorities as paternally caring for the *minzu*, Tibetans amongst them. Such Tibetan recourse to *pha yul* in "repositioning of selves to home regions" (Makley 2007: 33), no matter how far afield the search for work in an increasingly industrialised China has taken them, gives traditions such as *'cham*, which bring communities together in connection to their homelands, a pivotal role. In relation to this connection to land, David Germano gives an account of the late twentieth century Tibetan revival of the treasure revelation tradition (*gter*) as, in its "revivifying the sacred landscape and pilgrimage sites", being "fundamental to the re-formulation of Tibetan identity" (Germano 1998: 91). I would suggest here that, as an art form emergent from the dreams and visions of revered masters, *'cham* could be considered as a visionary tradition playing its part in that revivification.

Transformations of *'cham* in modern times noted by Mona Schrempf include the shortening of *'cham* rituals, both in terms of days length (from a week down to three days), and in terms of the individual dances-speeding them up. This, it is suggested, is to please modern audiences

who do not have patience for lengthy rituals and whose gaze has been shaped by exposure to the fast paced multimedia entertainments of (western) modernity. These transformations can be viewed as serving commercial and economic interests (Schrempf 1995).[23] In terms of economic concerns, sponsorship can be viewed as influencing the general tone and duration of *'cham* ritual dances. In Tibetan communities, festivals and ritual celebrations are supported by social systems of sponsorship in which being a patron (*sbyin bdag*) is considered highly meritorious in a karmic sense.[24] In more recent times, in exile communities, sponsorship has shifted from being rotated amongst local households approached directly by the monastery to relying upon eminent members of the exile community in the diaspora, themselves often funding their religious activities through recourse to western supporters from so-called 'developed', relatively wealthy countries. Such patrons gain through their patronage a particularly high status place at the *'cham* and so, it would follow, the ritual needs to fulfill the wishes or expectations following on from their sponsorship. In the case of opening *'cham* to western gaze and sponsorship, this naturally leads to questions of transformation which concern the movement from pleasing wealthy lay Tibetan sponsors whose concerns mostly focus around reaping karmic benefit and blessing descending (*byin babs*) for this or/and the next life, towards pleasing what are for the most part essentially high status tourists at the ritual. Such sponsors might expect, for example, to gain an experience of what they perceive as 'authentic' Tibetan ritual customs.

Following on from this, another transformation of the *'cham* is that of its transposition from Tantric ritual context into other spheres of performance. A precedent is arguably set for this by the seventeenth century Bhutanese transposition of Tibetan *'cham* into a new Bhutanese festival context known as *tshes chu*.[25] In the first Bhutanese *tshes chu*, Tibetan monastic *'cham*, described in manuscripts of the time as *gar 'cham*, were

[23] For discussion of the social role of *'cham* and that which its organisers and sponsors played for a community, also in historical terms, see Schrempf 2000.

[24] For discussion see Berg 2008: 82, referencing Klieger 1992; Goldstein 1997; Tucci 1998; Ruegg 1995. Also see Sihlé (this volume) regarding complex issues surrounding patronage and participation in Reb kong's Tantric communities.

[25] The *tshe bcu* derives from the use of *'cham* for state ritual and seems to have subsumed traditional Bhutanese harvest celebrations within the Tibetan Buddhist *Rnying ma* tradition of the Gongdue cycle of *gter ma* teachings, which are the inspirational underlay for the *tshes chu* as ritual performance (see Ardussi 2008, whose sources are the biographies (*rnam thar*) of Tibetan monks and pilgrims to Bhutan).

combined with feasting, drinking, folk dances and sporting events, to form a state ritual in which the head of state himself took the role of Padmasambhava (Ardussi 2008). This use of *'cham* in combination with other dance and sporting events for *tshes chu*, has given rise to the form of monastic *'cham* found in present day Bhutan in which folk and/or traditional dances play a significant part. Cathy Cantwell notes laity visiting from Bhutan presenting explicitly popular or folk dance and song interludes in addition to the Buddhist *'cham* pertaining directly to Tantric practice presented by monks during Jangsa Gonpa's *'Chi med srog thig* in Kalimpong, India (Samuel and Cantwell, forthcoming). This, within the Bhutanese *'cham* traditions as found in *tshe bcu*, shows the traditional inclusion of song and dance interludes not directly pertaining to the Tantric ritual within the overall structure of a *'cham* performed as part of that ritual.

An example can be found almost a century ago of *'cham* being performed in the absence altogether of ritual context: in Britain, to the chagrin of the Dalai Lama and the detriment of Anglo-Tibetan relations (Schrempf 1995: 92). Such divorce of sections of *'cham* from their ritual contexts continues in more recent times, one example being that of a short section of *'cham* appearing at the 1994 Berlin Jazz Festival (Schrempf 1995: 95). This brings to the fore the issues of identity negotiation attendant upon such transformations to *'cham* performances (cf. Schrempf 2002; cf. Murakami 2011), highlighting the question of what happens to contemporary Tibetan identity negotiation or construction once traditional religio-cultural performance genres such as *'cham* become separated from their ritual context.

Regarding this question of Tibetan identity (re)negotiations in response to interactions with non-Tibetans, it is unclear whether tourists, or westerners who have adopted Tibetan religions, are in fact as submerged as some scholars have suggested, in what has been termed 'western imaginings'; a Shangri-La complex.[26] Doubtless it is possible to argue that some at least are, however, the Tibetans organising the ritual are perhaps just as likely to be submerged in Tibetan imaginings of what westerners want and expect, might think is 'backward' or might not perceive as 'pure' Tibetan culture. A resultant contemporary transformation in terms of all performative Tibetan culture is that of notions of Tibetan-ness becoming commodified by Tibetans for tourist or/and political consumption, and ritual practices thus modified to concur with Tibetan imaginings of

[26] On this complex, see particularly Bishop 1989, Hutt 1996 and Lopez 1998.

what such ‘outsider’ (*phyi rgyal*) and/or tourist gazes (cf. Murakami 2011) might be. In Tibetan regions of the People’s Republic of China, an added layer to this is the pragmatic modification of ritual practices in response to Chinese state religious policies (Schrempf 2000), some of which relate to a lucrative tourist industry.

Hierarchical Spaces

Centres of power, both secular and spiritual, are reaffirmed and renegotiated in public festivals (cf. Berg 2008). Events such as the *’cham* performances taking place as part of Tantric ritual are a manifestation of human and non-human realms. As such, there are various degrees of spatial separation between performers who tend to be ritual specialists presenting the deities, lay performers engaging in more narrative or folk dance events, and spectators. In *’cham* performed in monasteries, adepts, or those enlisted by those ritual specialists as assistants and/or performers, mark out a purified and ritualised performance space and, within this sacred area, manifest deities for the continuation of their (most often monastic) religious lineage, and for the benefit of themselves and the non-specialist laity. The latter receive blessing (*byin babs*) from watching the *’cham*, and those amongst them who sponsor the ritual thereby maintain the reciprocal relations between monasteries and laity via which they accumulate merit. Eberhard Berg describes lay audiences at monastic *’cham* as ‘mere spectators’, demonstrating the lesser role that these are held to perform compared to those monastics performing the *’cham* (Berg 2008: 82). I would like to suggest here that it is precisely on the borders of this spectator-performer divide that fluidity is found within the fairly formal and hierarchical structures of *’cham* sufficient to enable socio-cultural shifts in power to occur and communities to (re)construct their identities.

The spiritual separation between specialist-performers and non-specialist spectators is reflected in the way in which the sacred space of monastic *’cham* grounds are designated for the monk performers, lay sponsors having privileged seating as audience around the grounds and ordinary laity spreading out from this concentrically arranged spiritual hierarchy. Cathy Cantwell describes offerings being made to the head Lama at the end of Kalimpong’s Jangsa monastery’s *’cham* in strict order: the chief sponsors first, followed by other practitioners and ending with non-practitioner laity (Samuel and Cantwell, forthcoming). Indeed, as Mona Schrempf notes regarding *’cham* in A mdo Sher khog, prestigious sponsors can be privileged not only by being given special seating and gifts such as victory banners,

but by being permitted to enter the *'cham* dance grounds in order to make direct offering to the performing deities (Schrempf 2000: 331–2).

In terms of the performative rite itself, the non-specialist or lay community expresses these degrees of separation between themselves and the ritual specialists, as Ana Marko notes in her ethnography of a *'cham* in Zanskar, by pulling back 'in fear' from the 'dangerous forces *commanded* by the monastery.' (Marko 1994: 137 [my emphasis]).[27] If lay people do take on performance roles in *'cham*, they may be obliged to observe prescriptive limitations on their ordinary behaviour in preparation for and during the *'cham*.[28] Physical separation of non-specialists from the inner *'cham* grounds has, in larger *'cham*, been enforced by either monastic or secular police (see Schrempf; Marko 1994). Such concentrically arranged spatial hierarchies are not limited to ritual dances termed *'cham* held by monasteries. In their description of the *lha mo gar 'cham* during Klu rol in Reb kong's Gling rgyal village, Dpal ldan bkra shis and Kevin Stuart observe that lay men dance on an inner ring, women form a ring around them, and children dance on the outermost ring of the performance space (Dpal ldan bkra shis and Kevin Stuart 1998). The *'cham* is, in effect, simultaneously '. . . a socio-cultural event and collective ritual.' (Schrempf 2000: 337).

This concentrical reflection of a hierarchical relation between human beings, the deities and other non-human beings, can be viewed as maintaining and reaffirming the social status quo and celebrating the 'interconnectedness' of human and divine beings (Berg 2008: 76). The earthly *maṇḍala* that is created in representing Tantric forces re-creates and re-establishes the precedence of those in religious authority in symbiotic relationship to their non-specialist patrons. The latter reinforce their own high social status as individuals wealthy enough to earn the merit of sponsoring the *'cham* which is seen to benefit the whole community. All the community rely on the ritual, and therefore its ritual specialists and sponsors, for the maintenance of their health and well-being, a health and well-being inseparable from that of the natural environment surrounding the *'cham* grounds. Thus, the *'cham* functions to reinforce the non-specialist community's commitment to a symbiotic relationship with the religious

[27] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore the role of the *A tsa ra*, but for future reference it could be interesting to explore it as inhabiting the borderlands between the ritual specialists and non-practitioner laity, as negotiating these intermediary spaces and closing the spaces between them through humour; as is arguably the case with truth-tellers in the theatre joker/jester tradition. For more on the *A tsa ra*, see Cantwell 1987.

[28] Examples include sexual abstinence, refraining from eating garlic or walking under drainpipes, all of which are considered polluting activities in certain religious contexts.

institution at its heart, through its re-enactment of both lay hierarchies and those of ritual specialists.

As scholars have noted, an intent central to the practice of *'cham* is that of subjugating malevolent or negative forces, including as this does driving out 'demonic' spirits, eliminating pollution of all sorts accumulated during a year, and also annihilating 'enemies of religion' and self-centred obstructions hindering the practice of religion (Schrempf 1994, 1999, 2000; Day 1989). As a necessary prerequisite, purifying the grounds upon which the dancers will perform and their audiences gather is the first important task of the performance. In doing so, the environment becomes that of deity. This is reflected in the Tantric notion of *maṇḍala*, the palatial abode of the presiding Tantric deity into which those empowered by Tantric ritual are invited by the Tantric officiate or guru during initiation rites. Tibetan ritual dances reflect "the essence regarding ritual space: the general creation of a purified and protected realm for a temple, a *stūpa* or a *maṇḍala* to be built upon" (Schrempf 1999: 198). The environment, as extension of rather than separate to its inhabitants, is revealed during *'cham* in its primordial nature as pure terrain presided over by deity.

Historical context for this creation of purified ritual space can be alluded to in the case of many Buddhist *'cham* by the role given to Guru Rinpoché, Padmasambhava, which often alludes to him as the founding Tantric magician who subjugated malevolent forces opposing Buddhism's spiritual conquest of Tibetan grounds.[29] This idea of the environment being purified, both before *'cham* during preparatory rites and during *'cham* by the sacrificial slaughter of malevolent forces opposing the practice of religion, is extended to include those who participate in *'cham* as performers or onlookers. As such, *'cham* can be considered a ritual act of purification, precipitating well-being for communities and their environs. In fact, Tibetan philosophic perspectives allow no dichotomy ultimately to exist between persons and environments, all of which arise interdependently in *maṇḍala*-like formations. On a Buddhist Tantric model, such dualities are transformed 'through their unification and transcendence.' (Schrempf 1999: 199). Thus, on these understandings, *'cham*, can be viewed as profoundly benefiting its observers (Schrempf 1994, 1995). Indeed, according to the aforementioned *'cham yig* translated by Nebesky Wojkowitz and attributed primarily to the fifth Dalai Lama, *'cham* has the power to

[29] For an in-depth description of the dance of Guru Rinpoché in eight aspects, as performed in a monastery from the Dudjom tradition, see Cantwell 2003.

completely transform the mind of those who watch it (1976: 227).[30] Motivations for attending and participating in *'cham* found amongst various sections of the communities within which it is practiced are multi-layered, from educated religious specialists to uneducated lay villagers. Motivations include, for example, Ladakhi audiences at *'cham* attending in preparation for the *bar do*, the intermediary realms after death and before rebirth, and hence as means to attain a better rebirth (Day 1989: 391, 407). Other common lay perspectives include focus on the experience of certainty or faith (*dad pa*), the generation of merit through virtue (*dge ba*)[31] and the receipt of blessing (*byin babs*) through the encounter with and presence of the gods.

As has been discussed, through public rituals such as *'cham*, human communities conduct a conversation with themselves through which they legitimise worldly and spiritual power relations between themselves and with the divine realms they hold to govern them, thereby reaffirming and renegotiating identities, both collective and individual. Charlene Makley, in her work on gender and revival, talks about circumambulation as part of a process of 'mandalization' in which benefit is accrued by proximity to the deity's place (*gnas*), the most powerful and empowering focus of which is found at the centre of the sacred space. This centre is the most purified space of the whole *gnas*, and those human and non human beings who wish to absorb its power by gaining access to as much proximity as possible to it, must be thought to display corresponding levels of purity. Thus, she argues, Tibetans construct social spaces along similar lines upon which the purified centre of the mandalised space stands in juxtaposition to its relatively impure peripheries (cf. Makley 2007, in particular chap. 3). In light of this analysis, I would like to tentatively suggest that the trance dancers of Reb kong's Bon po *'cham* may, in the act of spontaneously entering the central spaces of the deity's *gnas* be, consciously or otherwise, self designating as of sufficient purity to receive the ultimate empowerment and blessing possible from or through their connection with deity. Hence they are known as *byin brlabs babs pa*, or ones upon whom empowerment/blessing descends, amongst Tibetan communities

[30] Nebesky Wojkowitz dates this text at 1647 and says the fifth Dalai Lama intended it for the use of the abbot of the Potala's monastery (1976: 85). It is hence a text written by a religious specialist and intended for the use of one. The section of the text mentioned above is as follows: *legs pa'i phyag rgya'i rigs kun nyen bsdus pa'i / 'chams yig snang ba kun nas 'gyur nus pa / ngo mtshar bkod pa'i dga' ston 'di na'o //* (Nebesky Wojkowitz 1976: 226); see also Schrempf 1999.

[31] Such as giving donations to the monastery through sponsorship of the ritual (cf. Schrempf 2000).

in Reb kong, apparently in acceptance that it is upon the authority of the central deity that they transgress normal spatial boundaries, moving from impure peripheries closer to the purified, empowered and empowering centre of the *'cham maṇḍala*; the focal *gnas* of the deity.

Liminal Spaces

Perhaps nowhere are identities more avidly negotiated than in geographical borderlands or ethnic diasporas. A mdo has historically been a place of ethnic border identities, and these continue to play out in relation with and against each other, or 'otherness'.[32] The significance of the Reb kong region of A mdo as a frontier zone was noted by Dge 'dun chos 'phel in the first half of the twentieth century (Schrempf 2002: 150). Performance, as has been mentioned, offers a space within which established orders can be contested. I would, therefore, like to tentatively propose here that contemporary transformations to the performance of *'cham* in such border regions may be viewed as reflecting ethno-cultural identity negotiations, in relation to the 'other', and that they may do so in a fluid manner. As communities (re)affirm and (re)negotiate collective and individual identities, it is in the borderlands between humans and deities or/and between spectators and performers that fluidity sufficient to enable shifts in power relations to occur is found. In the ethnography given here, it was the *a tsa ra* and the trance dancers whose presence was most situated on the *'cham* grounds' borderlands between 'performers' and 'spectators'. The *a tsa ra* are figures who interact with both crowd of onlookers and *'cham* performers, adapting to whatever arises on the day and softening the interface between them through comic interaction.[33] As such, they could be said to be moving between the hierarchical spaces of the *'cham* grounds' *maṇḍala* and the more impure worlds at its peripheries. The trance dancers, on the other hand, might appear to be elements of those mundane worlds who become transformed through the power of their faith and the deity's blessing to traverse into ever more sacred realms. Hence they could be said to exist in the liminal spaces between realms: spiritual and worldly; sacred and social.

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[32] See Schrempf 2002 for discussion of Bon po *'cham* situated in A mdo borderlands, and Dhondup 2011 for an interesting framing of Reb kong within an anthropology of borderlands.

[33] See Pommaret for discussion of the didactic role of the *a tsa ra*, which describes them as transcending society's hierarchy (Pommaret 2006).

In seeking any precedent for trance phenomena similar to that described in the ethnography given above, a search for any record relating to Tibetan *'cham*, threw up only one brief mention by Sophie Day in her thesis 'Embodying Spirits: Village Oracles and Possession Rituals in Ladakh, North India' (1989). She quotes an informant as having had several people describe Buddhist monks at the *'cham* at Hemis dressing as 'witches' and this causing some female onlookers to faint with 'possession' (the English gloss she lends '*zhug shes*'). She says Kaplanian describes this as these women having been 'victims of jealousy'; unknowingly possessed by witches, their possession only coming to light through the 'power of the dancers' (Kaplanian 1981: 297 in Day 1989: 433). As can be seen from this interpretation, the possession, or '*zhug shes*', or, if not 'possession', the embodiment of monk performers, is viewed as an expression of the power of the gods. This is in contrast to female onlookers' states of *zhug shes*, which are viewed as possessions by malevolent forces brought to light by the purifying monk (male) gods, who then presumably put paid to such demonic influences during the exorcistic course of the *'cham*. Although there is this brief account of something similar to the phenomenon we observed in the Reb kong Bon po village *'cham* appearing in a pre-1980s Buddhist *'cham*, and cases of people falling into trance states during rituals are also found elsewhere, there are some salient differences in what is described in the ethnography above. For example, and importantly for the purposes of this chapter, no mention was made in the Ladakhi *'cham* of such possessed members of the audience entering the *'cham* grounds and dancing with the *'cham* dancers.

As Mona Schrempf's title (1995) 'From Devil Dance to World Healing' implies, early western scholarship on *'cham* tended to interpret even the deity dancers themselves as 'devils', perhaps due to the fierce expressions on the masks of the wrathful deities. Sophie Day reports a personal communication with C. Cech,[34] in which it is reported that female members of the audience at '*cham* became possessed during the section wherein monks portray the 'troublesome female demons' who were subjugated 'long ago at *Sa-skya* monastery in Tibet', and that these woman, by virtue of their having fallen into states of possession, are 'indicating their propensity for witchcraft' (Day 1989: 590, n. 48).

[34] I believe referring here to Crystyn Cech, although Day does not reference any of her work.

It does not seem possible to interpret non-performers falling into trance during the *'cham* I witnessed in Reb kong in the above manner: as being exorcised through viewing *'cham* and thus freed of a condition incurred due to the predilection of evil spirits for entering weak minded women. Firstly, although most of the trance dancers we witnessed generally in various Reb kong Bon po *'cham* were women, we also witnessed men, such as the one described in the ethnography above, going into trance, and at one village it is only men who do so. Also, as the ethnography attests, a number of the senior Bon po Tantric practitioners present went into trance. It is not possible to interpret non-performers in trance as being an exorcism of hitherto hidden devils with a predilection for weak minded people, such as women may be classed, when some of those non-performers are long standing and revered male Tantric practitioners. In relation to the question of gender in this analysis, in the absence of a systematic study focusing on the issue, it is not possible to give supported comment here. However, for the purposes of future research, it is notable that a significant proportion of trance dancers during Bon po *'cham* in Reb kong do appear to be women, and if this superficial observation were borne out by future data, a possible question for further research might be whether this relates to Hildegard Diemberger's observations concerning her findings that an increasing number of Tibetan spirit mediums are women and suggestions as to why this may be (Diemberger 2005).

According to those in the village described in the ethnography above, this phenomena of spectators falling into trance states during ritual events such as *'cham* has only been taking place in their village for the last few years, although in neighbouring Khyung bo village it has only been happening for a year or so.[35] It was viewed in this village as a recent development or transformation of ritual practices or, perhaps more precisely, of spectator reactions to them. This is, however, not always the case.[36] As we witnessed in the *'cham* above, reactions from family members to those exhibiting signs of trance are not necessarily positive. In the case of the woman trance dancer whose mother scolded her, she was not from the village where the *'cham* was held, but had married into it. She was thereby acting quite out of the usually subservient, modest and retiring role of a

[35] Personal communication with villager, Nov 2009.

[36] In an interview conducted by Dpa' mo skyid and Gerald Roche in November 2011 with a Bon po monk, he gave the impression that this phenomenon has existed for a longer period of time in Bon po *'cham*.

traditional daughter in law.[37] The reason she gave for this was her actions being beyond her control, which may indeed be the case, or it might be construed as a convenient explanation for acting with at least some degree of volition outside of prescribed female role models.

However, in another Reb kong Bon po village where only men fall into trance during '*cham*, villagers attribute this gender divide to local custom, which could suggest that trance states either can be consciously voluntarily avoided in order to accord with custom, or that deities take account of gender when causing trance, or that in the liminal spaces of trance there is some degree of volition. Whether there is some degree of volition in trance is an issue central to the notion commented on quite extensively by scholars that persons, such as the married-in daughter-in-law in the ethnographic account given above, by falling into trance attain a voice where otherwise would be denied them due to their marginalised social status. I would not apply this theory to the Reb kong trance dancers since they do not give voice to any particular social concerns during trance, and I would prefer in any case an approach attempting to understand such phenomenon in the context of the local discourse that underpins it.[38]

Bon brgya Rin po che or 'Alak Wönjia', the head of Reb kong's Bon po monastery, Bon brgya (A mdo pronunciation: 'Wönjia'), about 30km south-west of Rong bo, volunteered that such non-performers falling into trance should not be considered as deity-possessions but rather as examples of *byin babs*; being blessed by the deities.[39] This raises the question as to how precisely such blessing occurs and what it entails. Additionally, the view of Bon brgya Rin po che can be taken at face value as the opinion of a qualified lama who is privy to conventionally unseen realms. However, it is also possible that this reaction from a person in the highest position of authority at the largest Bon po religious institution in the area might be

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[37] For a study discussing the role of A mdo daughter in law, see Bassini 2007.

[38] For the 'deprivation hypothesis', in which states of trance or possession are linked to subordination or marginality, see Lewis 1971; Geoffrey Samuel describes an episode interpretable as such which appears in the documentary film *Eyes of Stone* (1989), directed by Vachani. In the scene described one woman gives voice to her discontent with her husband's behaviour during trance (Samuel 2005: 241–2); Graham Dwyer problematises the 'deprivation hypothesis' convincingly, preferring a phenomenological approach to understandings of illness attributable to trance or possession which aims to adopt a viewing of it from the cultural standpoint of those involved (Dwyer 2003).

[39] Personal communication with Professor Geoffrey Samuel. I am indebted to Geoffrey Samuel for questioning Bon brgya Rin po che regarding my topic during his 2010 visit to Reb kong.

concerned to preserve such authority, and so interpreting the lay trance dancers, particularly the women, as possessed or profoundly blessed by deities could be to admit them as a challenge to existent religious hierarchies as currently expressed in the *'cham*.

Having said this, categorising these trance dancers as receiving *byin babs* is by no means a negative.[40] Indeed, the fact that Bon brgya monastery displayed a picture of a lay woman in trance in a glass frame upon its wall would possibly suggest a certain pride in the occurrence or wish to advertise it as having lent some sort of authenticity to the monastery's rituals. The proximity of the deity could be enough, in local perceptions, to provoke reactions such as these trance states, especially where the persons in trance have strong faith.[41] Whatever the case, the notion of *byin babs* certainly entails some direct contact from deity and, as such, marks the occasion, if not the individual in receipt of it, as special. Indeed the etymology of the term *byin babs* suggests a notion of blessing descending (root: *'bab*, p. *babs*) from the gods. It is clear from the types of comments observers made when witnessing the trance dancers—for example, 'Truly Dralijemmo has come to this place'—that they did appear to perceive these lay village trance dancers as blessed and so authenticating the *'cham* in the sense of being an indication or marker of the deity's presence.

The phenomenon of spectators falling into trance at *'cham* has achieved some notoriety on the internet. For example, footage of *'cham* in the village described above can be found at http://www.rgbm123.com/music/301/, and of one held at Bon brgya monastery can be found at http://www.rgbm123.com/music/302/.[42] It is notable that during the latter *'cham*, held at the largest Bon po institution in Reb kong, the spectators who fell into trance did not enter the space of the *'cham* grounds where the masked ritual dance performance was taking place, nor dance with the masked dancers there. However, in the case of the *'cham* at one of the fifteen Reb kong Bon po *gsas khang*, described in the ethnography above, they do both these things. Internet searches on the phrase *byin babs pa'i*

40 I am indebted to Nichlas Sihlé for his input here when discussing the topic of the paper which developed into this chapter during the workshop 'Unity and Diversity—Monastic and Non-monastic Traditions in Amdo', Cardiff, Sept 2011.

41 A young Bon po schoolteacher from Ngo mo, called Sonam Gyatso, has researched the phenomenon and suggests a spectrum of phenomena classified according to the *lus ngag yid gsum* model as possible explanations of it (personal communication with Nicholas Silhé 2011).

42 Last accessed 14th June 2013.

gar 'cham throws up additional links, and the use of *byin babs pa* in this phrase itself can be taken to indicate that blessing is an important aspect of how this phenomena is perceived by local Tibetans. In interview, a Bon po monk[43] expressed the view that the trance states are a result of the deity blessing those who have great faith (*dad pa zhi ge yod ge*), and that this faith means that the *bla ma* can allow the deity to 'possess' such a person, which somehow cleanses them.

Concluding Comments

As previously discussed, the evocation of deity into embodied presence happens in Tantric practice within a sacred space known as a *maṇḍala*. In the case of *'cham*, this mandallic space is physically delineated, usually by chalk, as the *'cham* grounds. Levels at which the deity's empowering presence can be experienced or absorbed could be understood as increasing in intensity the closer to the centre of this space one gets (cf. Schrempf 1999: 202–3; cf. Makley 2007). Therefore, the closeness that participants in *'cham* are permitted to come to the centre of the *'cham* grounds' mandallic space, mandallic understood in a generic rather than literal way here, might be taken to indicate something about their status, level of purity and/or temporal roles within this ritual context. In the case of the ethnography above, the trance dancers did reach the very centre of the mandallic *'cham* grounds and were not evicted from them by the *dge bskos* in charge of maintaining discipline for the community during the rite, which, I tentatively suggest here, would indicate that, however their experience is interpreted, the profundity of their perceived connection to deity is not in doubt. In this context, it is interesting to note that whereas the trance dancers at the village *'cham* described above did dance to the centre of the *'cham* grounds, those I witnessed at a *'cham* at Bon brgya monastery, if they entered the *'cham* grounds at all it was only on the extreme peripheries. Also, at the Bon brgya *'cham* a quite secular presence made it some way in to the *'cham* grounds' central spaces, in the form of a number of Han Chinese tourists wielding large cameras and one Qinghai TV camera.[44] This is an example of, as was touched on earlier, lay who are privileged by their status as *sbyin bdag*, as patrons, either voluntarily in the sense of giving

[43] Interview conducted by Dpa' mo skyid and Gerald Roche in Nov 2011.

[44] The Tibetan girl operating the TV camera said she felt it awkward that in order to complete the task set her by her job she was obliged to enter the *'cham* grounds in a manner she would ordinarily never do.

as part of a religious practice or involuntarily as in paying a tourist fee to be permitted into religious spaces as outsider-observer-photographer. The comments made previously regarding the commodification of religio-cultural identities that may occur when *'cham* is removed from ritual context can also apply here.

To summarise, the suggestion proposed here is that the practice of *'cham* reinforces both social hierarchies and those of religious institutions, and revitalises Tibetan identities through reinforcing connection to homelands and to an enacted visionary tradition. The *'cham* grounds can be seen as generically modelled on a Tantric *maṇḍala*. Within these sacred spaces, as is generally the case with the practice of Tibetan religions, both supra-mundane and worldly concerns are embodied (cf. Samuel 1993). The observance of this sacred space of the *'cham* grounds, and the institutionally and socially constructed hierarchies of what is permitted to enter them and how, has traditionally been enforced by religious authorities and/or state police.[45] In the case of the Bon po village's *'cham* described in the ethnography above, the *dge bskos* were there to keep the discipline of the ritual space and the local, state police attempted to discipline myself—an outsider they evidently viewed as a threat to the state-centred order of things. Arguably, the way in which the trance dancers entered the inner grounds spontaneously and without formal invite from those in positions of religious authority, can be considered equivalent in a generic sense to entering the inner grounds of a Tantric *maṇḍala*. This occurrence reflects that which takes place during an initiatory or empowering Tantric rite. Indeed the term *byin babs* can be translated as 'empowerment' (Huber quoted in Schrempf 1999: 198, 214, n. 1). The fact that the *dge bskos* in charge of disciplining the event did not obstruct them doing so, could be considered as reinforcing the communal perception that their trance states indicate divine presence. Just as initiates during Tantric empowerment ritual are invited by deity via the lama to enter such inner sanctums, so these trance dancers can be seen as dancing themselves into the heart of the *'cham* grounds, by implication with the authorisation of the deities who have blessed them. The *byin babs* the trance dancers receive operates on both mundane and supramundane levels: as both social and ritual empowerment.

As has been discussed, whilst the contemporary transformations to *'cham* practice described in scholarship thus far undoubtedly continue to

[45] One example of the latter is that of the Indian police policing an exile community's *'cham* (Schrempf 2002).

develop along the lines described, this chapter describes a form of transformation which, in contrast to those currently appearing in research, arguably implies a very different set of implications for the communities involved. The trance dancers simultaneously reaffirm religious hierarchies through attesting to the presence of deity and yet undergo a transformation from 'mere' spectators whose contact with the deities is mitigated by ritual specialists to that of directly empowered ritual participants whose benefit in receiving such blessing/empowerment (*byin babs*) is unmitigated by those specialists and thought to come directly from deity realms due to their faith (*dad pa*). Although the phenomena of non-performers at *'cham* becoming 'possessed' or falling spontaneously into trance and/or trance dancing has been noted by a few scholars, it is, to my knowledge, not evidenced in the scholarship of recent years, and the interpretation placed upon it by the scant reference in past scholarship is different from the one offered here.

It should be noted that this phenomena is a recent development happening on a small scale in particular communities and not one generally observed throughout A mdo, nor one that all the inhabitants of Reb kong may be aware of. However, an interpretation tentatively suggested here is that, rather than reinforcing existing institutional and social hierarchies, the phenomenon of non performers moving across the boundaries between spaces designated for mere spectators and those reserved for the performance of deity, could function in a way similar to that of the *a tsa ra* in traversing between such hierarchical structures. As such, they transcend normal spatial boundaries, moving from impure peripheries closer to the empowerment found at the centre of the *maṇḍala*; at the focal point of the deity's *gnas.* Both non Tantric specialist laity, particularly women, move outside of their normative social and gender roles, as in the example of the daughter in law falling into trance and dancing with *Sgra bla'i rgyal mo* in her in-law's village. The notion of Tantric *maṇḍala* is used here as generic trope for a boundaried concentric space of conventionally unseen realms whose embodied presence directly affects conventionally lived-in worlds and their communities.

If the purpose of *'cham* is to evoke or demand the presence of deity within a ritual context, by expressing deity on whatever level these non-performers in trance do, through their faith as evidenced in receipt of the blessing or/and empowerment of *byin babs* from deity, by spontaneously entering the inner space of the *'cham* grounds they could be viewed as circumventing religious and (in the case of female trance dancers) institutionally male dominated authorities, thereby claiming an authenticity

as practitioner-devotees which could be seen as coming directly from the gods. Whatever the case, by dancing the gods, those attending *'cham* validate the ritual both as a blessing and as cleansing and empowering its spectators, not as passive recipients, but by transforming their role into that of ritual participants in the fullest sense of the term. Thus, on a model of performance that is fluid and laden with the potential to change established orders, these transformations of *'cham* have repercussions for the identities and relationships that they play out.

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